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H U N T I N G    T A L K .  
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MAJOR W. FRASER-TYTTLER.

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T O

M Y    W I F E.

(M. H. W. G. S.)





U N L E S S .

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Unless you can ride, when the foxhounds run,  
    With the flying pack before you;  
Unless you can feel, when led by none,  
    That hell itself won't floor you;  
Unless you can know, with big timber in front,  
    With a big heart towards it you're striding;  
Unless you can lead through a straight fast hunt -  
    Oh, fear to call it riding!

Unless you can drive through a skirting crew  
    To the place where you mean to ride;  
Unless you can go on a slug or a screw  
    As you would on your stable's pride;  
Unless you can feel that it's heaven you're in  
    As over the grass you are striding,  
Unless you can know that to funk is to sin -  
    Oh, never call it riding!

After Mrs. Barrett-Browning,

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## C O N T E N T S.

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## P R E F A C E.

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It is usual in books of this kind to put forward in the Preface some reason or excuse for their appearance. I have observed that publication is frequently ascribed to the advice of relatives and friends who, having read the manuscript, have so insistently urged that a wider public should be allowed to enjoy it, that a more or less modest and unwilling author has given way. In my case I have been unable to detect any such pressure.

Even "M. H. W. G. S.," to whom I dedicate the work, gave me much assistance, but no direct encouragement, although often able to keep awake while I read whole chapters. Of course, nobody really has all those initials. The letters stand for "My Helper with Grammar and Spelling."

For myself I must admit that, on reading over the manuscript for the last time, my chief feeling is one of amazement that anyone could make so fascinating a subject so dull.

There is in the book very little that is new, but there is a good deal that is sure, and if, dear reader (it would be taking too sanguine a view to use the plural), you plough through it, you may possibly gain a few useful hints. I near the end of my Preface, and am still without any excuse or reason for publication, so I think I will just put it down to obstinacy. I have lived more or less for hunting all my life; I said I would write a book about it, and I have. I just said "a book" - no adjective. But I fear, if I added the adjectives I have employed while writing it, I could not get my Preface into print.





The book has one merit: I am publishing it privately, and it will not cost anybody anything. The contents with a Hunting Song thrown in, are well worth the money.

In conclusion, lest that reader I have already referred to should think this Preface light or even amusing, let me hasten to assure him that all the rest of the book is very serious; that is a much better word than "dull."

W. T. FRASER-TYTIER.

Rock,  
Washington,  
Sussex.



# H U N T I N G    T A L K.

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## CHAPTER I.

I have lived my life - I am nearly done,  
I have played the game all round;  
But I freely admit that the best of my fun  
I owe it to horse and hound.

WHYTE-MELVILLE.

The future outlook for hunting is not very clear, and we seem to be faced with this proposition - that many, probably most, subscribers will be less well off than in pre-war days (war profiteers have not, as a rule, been hunting men), that there may be fewer of them, and that as the cost of hunting a country will be greater, those who do hunt will have to subscribe on a higher scale.

Jorrocks, as usual, was quite to the point in one of his "lectors" when he said: "The cost of hunting, my beloved 'earers, like all other things, depends almost entirely on 'ow you go about it. The only really indispensable outlay is the subscription to the 'ounds, which ought always to be paid punctual in advance."

We cannot economise in our hunt subscriptions, that seems quite certain, so we must endeavour to do so in our personal hunting expenditure.

And there I come to the chief object of this little book, which is written with the idea of giving a few hints to keen lads as to picking up cheap horses, turning them into hunters, the making of four-year-olds, and the riding of them, when made, up to hounds.

As a young man I suffered from a painfully small income, but I never let it interfere with



my determination to hunt, and perhaps the experience I collected may be of use to those who have to hunt "on the cheap".

It may be that many a lad in whose way riding had not previously come, joining a cavalry or yeomanry regiment for the War, has realised the joy of riding and found himself a horseman. If to any such, when they take to hunting, the hints in this book prove of service, I shall be rewarded.

I have kept a hunting diary since the year 1887, which to some measure should restrict me to actual facts in the following pages.

It has been a pleasure to turn over old diaries and letters which recalled good hunts enjoyed with cheery comrades in days gone by, but I recognise clearly that, in illustrating my various arguments and points by personal experiences, I cannot fail to be somewhat egotistical.

Many better men to hounds have I seen, but obviously one can only write with inside knowledge of one's own experiences, not of other men's. What first made me think of embarking on this book was the habit I noticed in so many men, some of them good horsemen, of accepting their hunters, so to speak, as they found them.

How often one hears a man say: "This brute won't jump without a lead," or "won't face water," or "cannot be got over any sort of a fence out of a road." Now, any such faults result in a horse being almost useless as a hunter. When the rider was a rich man, it generally meant that he sent the horse back to the dealer whence it came, and got another in its place. You may be sure the dealers' man soon knocked the fault out of it, whatever it might be. But if you are a poor man and become owner of a horse with some such fault, you have to take the place of the dealers' man, and by determined and skilful riding "straighten it out" yourself.





To make horses do just what you want, the first thing to learn, besides keeping your temper - which is, of course, essential - is to ride with both hands on the reins. A man who can only ride over fences with one hand on the reins and the other used as a sort of balancing pole, must abandon all idea of making or even improving a hunter. He may, and often does, go very well on the perfectly finished article, but nothing else will suit him. As a lad I thought George Bird - a very fine horseman, well known in the Epsom district - put a horse at a fence as well as any man I ever saw. He never wore spurs and hardly ever carried a whip, and used a single rein ring snaffle and seldom a martingale. Carrying his hands low and very wide apart, it was always a pleasure to see a horse jump with him, and I have seldom seen horses more perfectly balanced and presented at their fences.

I know it is often said that you cannot "collect" a horse in a snaffle bridle, but in Ireland I have not noticed that the horses ridden by horsemen (the proportion of horsemen to riders is, I think, higher in the sister Isle than with us) sprawl about or show any sign of not being well held together, and the snaffle is almost universal. As a rule, they are, I admit, riding on lighter and sounder ground, but also, as a rule, they are riding greener and less "made" horses. If the English hunts were polled, there would be an almost solid vote for the double bridle; but, if you could lower the franchise and admit the horses we hunt to the polling booth, I think it would be found that they went equally solidly for the snaffle. There must, of course, be good in a bridle that is so universally popular with English hunting men as the double bridle, but I would suggest that when a horse is found to be going uncomfortably in it, it is well to remember there is an alternative, and that a snaffle should be given a trial.

If you want to ride all sorts of horses and make them carry you to hounds, I hold that you must have patience and good temper, with plenty of determination.



Ride your horse in the mildest bit in which he will go to your liking, keep your reins long, and your hands wide apart. Throw in a strong seat and good hands, and there are very few horses that will not go where and as you mean them to.

A really strong seat can be acquired by any active lad who gives his mind to it. Long steady trotting in a saddle, without stirrups, goes a long way towards it. This, however, must be persevered in, or it does not strengthen and develop the riding muscles; moreover, it is useless unless the rider sits properly. The grip must be got entirely with thigh and knee; if the toes are turned out and a grip obtained with the back of the calves, the exercise is without effect, for the wrong muscles are then brought into play.

Let me give two instances from my Argentine experience, to show to what perfection strength in the saddle can be brought, or, rather, strength on a horse, since both feats were on the bareback. The first exhibited sheer strength of seat such as I have never seen equalled; the second, absolute perfection of balance and grip combined.

A "bagual" had been caught up, as I wished to try my very 'prentice hand at breaking. Now, a "bagual" has never been made a pet - he will not eat sugar out of your hand. He is at least five or six years old, and therefore strong, and he has come in contact with man but twice in his life, once when lassoed and knocked over to be branded, and once for another operation. The mares in my day were never ridden or broken. This particular "bagual" was very violent - smashed a lasso and knocked men about freely. So violent was he that I gladly fell in with the suggestion that a more experienced rider should mount him for the first ride. Argentine methods of breaking are abrupt, and the first ride is given directly the animal is caught - as soon, in fact, as a piece of raw hide can be tied in its mouth as a bit and a saddle got on its back.



The first ride over, the "bagual" was laboriously towed up to a tying post, and had just reached it, when he flung himself over and broke the raw-hide rope on his halter. A big "Lomador", or professional horsebreaker was standing near. It was not his show, and he looked graceful, but very indolent, uninterested, and sleepy. But when this accident happened, he became fully awake with rather startling and effective suddenness. A horse was standing near him, bridled but without a saddle. With a bound the man was up, and the trained cattle-horse was at full speed in a few strides. Before the "bagual" had really got going, they were alongside; but the troop of mares and colts with which the "bagual" ran had been let out of the corral, and with his companions in front it seemed incredible that any man could stop him. It was an exciting moment as they tore on, locked together. Then the "Lomador" leaned over and caught the two feet of raw hide that hung from the halter. Still at top speed, tearing over rough and smooth as it came, he made very sure of his grip, twisting the raw hide well round his hand. Then came the tug of war. Lying far back, and exerting a grip on his own horse that must have been that of an iron vice, he began to stop him very gradually. For a few strides it seemed as if he must be torn off; but his great strength prevailed, and both horses stopped. The tamer (for that is the literal translation of "Domador") had won, and actually proceeded to tow the "bagual" back with him. Help soon reached him, and, handing over his charge, he trotted back, unsmiling and indifferent, and lit a cigarette, evidently considering that the incident was closed and required no remark on his part.

The other case happened at shearing time. A very small man with short legs had turned up and been engaged for the work. He was a stranger and unknown to the other shearing hands. One day he was asked where he came from and what he worked at when at home. The very small man replied that he came from Corrientes and was a "Domador". His questioner laughed and told him his legs were too short for horse taming. After that the small man had to put up with a good deal of





chaff, and was always called the "Domador". He laid no further claim to the title, and the chaff did not appear to worry him. But a day came when there was either more of it than usual, or the little man's temper was wearing thin, and he did speak. What he said was: "Get any horse you like, and I will ride him and show you that I am a "Domador"'. Then he went on with his work.

There was almost always on an Estancia one perfect fiend in horsehide, kept for such occasions, never ridden unless some young blood wanted to give a show, or the peons wished to take the conceit out of some newcomer. Such a one we had in our "Big Zaino", and the little man was told he could try his hand on it the following Sunday, and that, if he could ride it, all chaff would cease.

Sunday came. The "big Zaino" was run up early into the corral. At the hour fixed for the show the shearing hands and everybody else on the place trooped down there. The little man walked down too, but he did not carry with him his recado (saddle) or bridle. Men wondered, and feared that he was going to cry off, and that they would miss their show; but his expression was not the expression of a man who intended to shirk.

Walking into the corral, he asked a peon to lasso the "big Zaino" and to drag it up near the slip rails. Then he asked some bystanders to slip the rails out, walked up to the horse, vaulted on, and told the peon to free him. No doubt the horse thought he saw his way to one of the easiest of his long roll of victories, and with one rocketing bound was through the opening. That, to his surprise, did not displace the little rider, and he went on his way, bucking like the perfect devil he was; still the little man sat there. Now our champion bucker felt he must do his very best. With a free unbridled head and unencumbered by saddle, he had all points in his favour; yet the easy victory had not come. Yet he had in reserve further devilments; he



began to lose ground as he bucked - rather to buck backwards, as it were. (I may say that, as long as a buckner travels forwards, he is a little easier to sit). Then as he bucked he twisted and turned, tied and untied himself in all his best knots, doing full and complete justice to his very evil reputation. Still the little man sat on - not only sat on, but dealt him at intervals shrewd blows with his raw-hide whip. Then the climax came, for the little man leant right forward and smacked the sweating neck with both his hands. From those who knew best a little gasp of admiration went up. With that the little man seemed to think that he had made good, and soon after, swinging his right leg over the neck, landed lightly on his feet, leaving the "big Zaino" to clear out to his own troop and to ponder over what kind of adhesive plaster shaped like unto a man he had come in contact with! If, as he strolled back to the corral, there was a slight suggestion of swagger in his walk, who can blame the little man? It was a fine feat of horsemanship, and he had made good. He was actually given a cheer - a very, very rare exhibition of feeling with the peons - and was chaffed no more.

To those who have not ridden buck-jumping horses I may explain that to lean forward and remain, when a horse is bucking badly, is a terribly difficult feat even in stirrups. I who write have in my time leant forward several times (on my part, I may remark, an entirely involuntary movement), and the next moment found myself no longer riding, but flying. I never liked the change; the flight was comparatively short, and the ground very hard when you hit it.

Those peons of Entre Rios have left with me a very kindly recollection. I liked their keen but immovable Indo-Spanish faces, liked their easy grace and superb horsemanship. It is true they had their faults - their big knives and their quick tempers - and I admit those Englishmen who knew them best were the most careful (I talk of the early 'eighties) never to take off their revolvers. Still, they were brave men and they could ride.



## CHAPTER II.

We, too, sprung from the loins of the Ishmaelite  
   stallions,  
We glory in daring that dies or prevails,  
From the counter of squadrons and crash of battalions  
To rending of blackthorns and rattle of rails.

LINDSAY GORDON.

I once heard a cabman close a discussion he had been engaged in, with a slightly intoxicated confrère, with the remark: "You better get a jug that fits you; the one you are wearing is too big."

So I would say to a novice: "Get a horse that fits you, fits you in every way, and suits the country you are going to hunt in." This, of course, is easy enough if you can afford to go to one of the big dealers, pay him his price, and with his help select just what you want. Under such happy circumstances, if the horse does not prove to your liking, you can generally arrange to exchange it for another. That makes things easy for the fairly wealthy man, and for him many of the hints in this little book are of no value. But if you have to pick up a cheap hunter where you can, and make the best of it, it is quite another matter. Don't, if you can avoid it, buy a bigger horse than you actually need, first, because little good ones are more easily found than big good ones, and, secondly, because a man never really goes as well on a horse that is too big for him as on one that fits him.

I don't altogether believe in the "two stone in hand" theory. If you take a big horse and a little sharp horse, and gallop them at an even 11 stone 7 lbs., or 12 stone, over a few miles of country, the little one is quite likely to win.





Of course, big men must have big horses, but I never could see what small men gain by having them. To come back to the start, get a horse that fits you.

In picking up a cheap hunter, don't listen to all you hear about him. He must have some drawbacks or he would not be cheap, but there is a great deal of nonsense talked about horses. At the most, consult one friend whose judgment you value and make up your own mind.

Horses go in all shapes, but I would like rather to insist on shoulders and, if possible, on quality. The very common one are rarely satisfactory, but I fear the heavy-weight with a light pocket will find that weight carriers with quality are very hard to come by. As regards shoulders, I am inclined to think that very few men are really good judges of them. Yet I have seldom met a hunting man who was not convinced that he could tell the working merits of a shoulder at a glance. With my own horses I have noticed that those shoulders which many men picked out as being unexceptional were by no means those which I found the most perfect in action. Shoulders can, of course, be judged best when you are in the saddle.

If you get a chance to ride a horse before buying it, take him on to a pathway which is a little above the roadway, walk him along it with a loose rein, and let him step back into the road. If he does it without any jar, you may be sure he can use his shoulders. Unless a policeman happens to take your name for riding on the footpath, it is best to do this several times before making quite sure. I can't say I was ever troubled by the police, but then most of my buying has been done in Ireland.

"Pullers" are best avoided, really hard pullers, especially in these sad days of wire. They must anywhere add to the difficulty of



riding to hounds. Take a case, for instance, when you are tearing along beside a thick, impregnable fence, with hounds running hard on the other side of it, and apparently bending from you. Suddenly you come on a hole through which you can pop. With a handy horse you can pull up short and jump into the same field as the hounds, but with a puller it is different. You have to estimate how long it will take to stop him, and whether it will be better to hold straight on and chance the swing of hounds away from you not being serious, or to set to work to stop and turn your over-resolute horse. Quickness is a great asset in riding to hounds, and that is why I insist on the handy horse that fits you.

I have seen a few men go marvellously well on pullers, and Custance, in his book of "Riding Recollections," tells of Captain Trotter coming out with the Quorn on a horse on which he had the most powerful tackle that could be invented. Yet the horse galloped straight through a strong flight of rails, straight through the pack, and ran away for two miles. He goes on to tell how Captain Trotter brought the horse back and finished his day on him. He bought him that evening for a small sum, and eventually made him into a very good hunter and sold him for a large one.

But then we are not all Jock Trotters. Probably no better or more powerful horseman ever got into a hunting saddle. Whatever horse found itself between his legs became a hunter. I saw him once on the first of October, in one of the latest seasons I have ever known, take on a very strong section of the Pytchley country, riding a horse that knew very little, anyway, when Trotter started on him that morning. The country, except that the going was soft, was in exactly the same condition it had been all summer, and when I add that he was then far from young, the reader can judge what manner of man Jock Trotter was. My advice is, leave those sort of pullers to such men, and there are not many of them. A moderate puller, if not old, can very often, by mild biting and careful handling, be entirely cured. A great many men, of course, are not happy unless their horse takes hold to a certain extent. I don't



like it myself, and, by using mild bits and riding with long reins, I always tried to cure a horse of taking hold, and, as I rarely bought anything but young horses, generally succeeded.

To ensure a horse going kindly and pleasantly, riding with long reins is a great secret, and a secret I for one found most difficult to learn. It is so easy in theory to keep them long, and so hard in practice when a horse is "at" you. Dick Christian knew what he was talking about when he said: "Always give them plenty of rope." If you are going to pick up moderate horses cheap and turn them into good ones, you must learn to do that.

A buyer of cheap ones must make up his mind quickly, for a seller, once he has determined to cut a loss and get rid of a horse, generally loses no time over the operation. If you find, in a quick, cheap deal, that you have got hold of a really unsound one, sell him again at once. If you don't waste money on his keep, but get rid of him, you can't lose much. You have bought cheap, and will always get a few pounds back at auction. If you have a farm, or other means of keeping your crock quite cheaply, that alters the case a little, but I always made it my rule to get quit.

I remember once, though, being saved by luck from making a bad mistake in this way with a little mare I owned called Peace. She went constantly lame, and the vet. said he thought it was in the feet. I had just had her run out, one frosty morning, when I was in no sweet temper or optimistic mood, and found her lame again. A friend who did a little horse-dealing happened to look in, and I said: "There you are - twenty-five pounds, and she is yours". He did not take her, and that very day my man Grant located the real trouble - a tiny splint under the knee. I hunted her straight on, and she never missed her turn again, and proved one of the soundest and best. When I got ill and had to sell my horses, she made a hundred and sixty guineas at auction. I think I am right in saying that Baroness Burton, who bought her, and with whom she made a great





name, refused double that sum from a dealer.

That was a chance to pick up a cheap one, but the buyer would have had to be quick, and if he had come back in half an hour, I don't suppose I should have been on. However, there does not appear to be any other moral in the tale, for I do not recommend anyone to buy unsound ones. It is difficult enough to keep the sound ones fit if sport is good and you are shoving them along.

One thing I would impress on a lad: don't be afraid of buying a horse because he goes badly with another man whom you consider a superior rider to yourself. He may have a groom that upsets it; he may have too many horses, and this one may not get enough work to steady it. He may once, through his own fault, have got wrong with the horse, and horses never forget. You may, too, be better than you think, and the other man may be beginning to feel the loss of nerve, though still a secret between himself and that particular horse in whom he has lost confidence. And, above all, remember that a horse may go badly with one man and well with another, quite independently of their merits as horsemen. I know one very peculiar case bearing in a manner on this. The horse had been a good one, but gradually got the better of his owner, and he lent it to different people to see what they could make of it. With one man he jumped well, but pulled terribly hard - in fact, fairly took charge and ran away. With a lady he did not pull an ounce, but refused every fence she put him at; and with another man he neither pulled nor refused, but never rose properly, got about half-way up a fence, and proved a most dangerous ride.

Now, the first man was a most consummate horseman, and had in perfection the art of giving them rope. The lady was a very good rider, for whom horses generally went well. The other man certainly had the knack of making his horses jump. I don't know what became of the horse, but it is quite possible if he found an owner to suit him, that he would again become a good hunter.

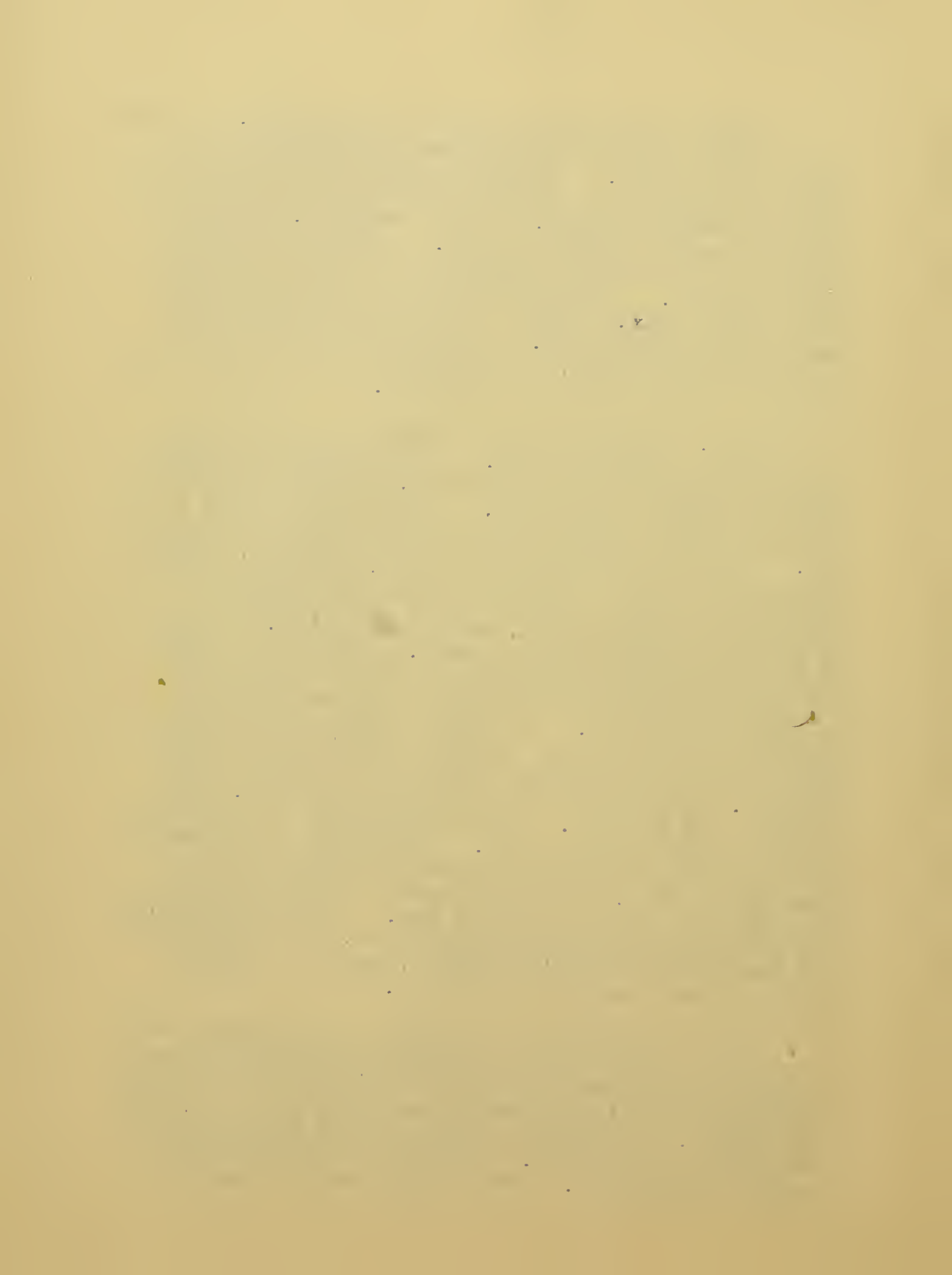




Another case I came across in Ireland. I was put on the horse with the idea of seeing how he would go with me. Nothing was said about his pulling proclivities; he was a most perfect type of fourteen stone hunter, full of quality, and his manners were apparently good. Yet some instinct warned me that, once set going, he would prove a real handful. Fortunately, on coming away with their first fox, hounds ran along some very deep meadows beside a road. Nobody went into them, except the servants, who, coming out of cover with hounds, could not avoid doing so.

This, I thought, is a chance to prove if my instinct is right or not. So I turned my horse, and he bounded out of the lane, cleverly but with extraordinary resolution. Then he got going in earnest, and I soon knew I had gauged him correctly. At the third fence we had closed up, and a whipper-in was in front of me; it seemed certain he would be well into the next field before I reached the fence, but, as a precaution, I took a strong steadier at my horse. The only result of the attempted steadier was a rush which one might call terrific and which took me right on to the whipper-in. I caught his horse on the quarter and sent that careful animal flying off the top of the bank at a pace he had not contemplated. Luckily no actual harm was done, and neither of us fell. Soon afterwards we checked, and I managed to pull up. The owner of my free-going mount showed no anxiety to change, but I was quite firm, and threatened to let the horse go and walk home if he did not. So he reluctantly climbed on to the resolute one, and in due course disappeared into space, while I enjoyed an excellent hunt on his horse.

Now, the curious thing about that horse was that many first-class men tried to ride him, including steeplechase jockeys who did not mind at what pace he did his walls and banks, yet no one succeeded, except one inexperienced lad, for whom he went delightfully. The lad, unfortunately, could not buy him. The result was, a horse up



to weight and full of quality, that if rideable was worth big money, went, such was his evil reputation, for a few pounds to drag out his life in a side-car.

I would suggest, if you can only buy a cheap one, don't be afraid of taking a risk. It is much better to buy a horse worth good money, with some fault or vice, at a cheap price than to buy a common slow horse that has no particular "crab," yet who will never really satisfy you. You may straighten out the former, but you can never alter Nature's handiwork in the latter.

To the man who has to pick up cheap horses I would say: Carefully study make and shape (there are many excellent books on that subject, which greatly help), but avoid all fads, and do not expect to buy a cheap one without some faults. If you do, it will probably mean you have got hold of an unenterprising brute without faults or merits. In forming our opinion of a horse, we unluckily cannot see the most vital point of all - the heart. If only we could really tell by looking at them what horses are stout-hearted "stayers," what a comfort it would be! But all we can do is to look for good girth and room for heart and lungs.

I have read somewhere that John Scott, "The Wizard of the North," said of legs, "the best-looking go first." I don't know that I would go as far as that as regards hunters' legs, but I must say I am never afraid of legs that fill, and have many a time proved them to last well.

For a light weight who wants to hunt cheaply, and has no ambition to make his own hunters or talent for "straightening out" queer-tempered horses, I would without hesitation recommend cobs or ponies. The small ones can nearly always be bought cheaply, for dealers don't want them. Then, again, they require less skilled stable management, are cheaper to feed when in work, and cheaper to summer, for they are much more hardy. I often think that unless we go back to pony blood for our hunters, we shall get them too highly bred and delicate, but that is another matter. A light weight on a really



brilliant cob or pony can go anywhere a horse can go, and often where he cannot.

I remember some years ago a grey polo pony, ridden by a lady in the Grafton country. It is not a country I should pick out as most suitable to a pony, yet that little grey jumped it to perfection. Early or late in the day, wherever that lady's pilot went, the grey went. The pilot, I may add, was a very hard-riding husband mounted on big and also very good hunters.

I have often heard it objected that a cob makes the fences look big, but, as long as they are jumped safely and well, I never could see that it mattered what they looked like. And if you do get a fall, it is much pleasanter - or, at least, less unpleasant - to have a light little one on you than a heavy big one. I have owned several really brilliant little ones, and seen sport well in many different countries on them. One of the best I bought in an odd way. I rode her with hounds one day in Ireland. She was so wild I thought she would never do for hunting. Whether it was to practise her jumping or to try to jump me off I know not, but she insisted on taking wild bounds into the air, so violent and sudden that I could not stop her. One of her jumps took her more or less over another horse's quarters, and I heard the rider remark to a friend: "He had me lepped entirely, and he changed on my head." However, he received my apologies most kindly. They are more forbearing towards young horses in Ireland than in England; there I might have been told that if I could not ride my horse I had better take it home. I decided not to buy her, as I thought that when full of good oats she would be unrideable. Later I was told she was perfectly quiet in harness, and as I wanted a trapper and she had the merit of being cheap, I bought her. She was fairly right in harness, and I used to drive my mother in a very low pony phaeton with her, as it was the only kind of trap my mother could then get into, and to the last she had iron nerves. The mare, if checked or kept standing, did rather twist and turn the long phaeton about, until there was some excuse for a friend's remark that "she looked like an eel on a night-line";





but she never "threw a lep" when in it but once, and then I was luckily alone, just coming out of the stable-yard. She knocked a bird-cage off the wall at such a height that I resolved there and then that so much talent for jumping must be turned to some account. I gave her a little training and took her to Hurlingham, where she won the jumping prize, and at Ranelagh, too, she jumped perfectly, only just touching the water with a hind foot, and being a very good second. I never tried her again in the show ring, but I have no doubt that with careful training she might have won many prizes.

When the winter came, I felt I must try my trap-per as a hunter, but I hardly knew what the result would be. However, in two or three days she came perfectly to hand, and a more brilliant little hunter I never owned. I saw many a good hunt on her with the Pytchley, Grafton, and Meynell. She was what they call in Ireland a "polo," but whether she could ever have been measured I know not. But many a good, cheap little hunter could be picked up under that heading in the Emerald Isle. It was especially easy to buy them if the sellers thought in their hearts that they would never really measure for the game. Nearly all Irish ponies and cobs seem to be born jumpers and to need very little schooling. I remember a young Irish friend of mine coming out hunting a few years ago on an Irish polo pony. He assured me it had never in its life been schooled or jumped over a fence. I have been in Ireland several times, and do not accept without hesitation all that an Irishman tells me about a horse or pony, but certainly in the morning that particular pony did not appear to know anything, yet he improved at every fence. We had a sharp little gallop late, when it fenced very well indeed. I need hardly add that my young friend was a consummate horseman, as so many of his countrymen are.

In the next chapter I will tell, for the encouragement of hard-up youth, of two cheap hunters I owned in years gone by. That they were cheap cannot be denied, as their total cost was ten pounds, and in telling of them I honestly think, with the help of my diary, I have kept strictly to facts, and have not allowed memory to exaggerate their merits or failings.





### CHAPTER III.

'Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming  
grass,  
To wander as we've wandered many a mile,  
And blow the cool tobacco cloud and watch the white  
wreaths pass,  
Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

LINDSAY GORDON.

I had just returned from the Argentine, where I had fairly lived in the saddle, parting cattle, training horses, riding races, and playing polo, so I was in good riding trim, and keen to get a hunter; but owing to the state of my finances paying for one was a difficulty.

One day, having to go into a house-agent's yard at Epsom, though not the sort of place one expects to find a horse, I saw a chestnut cob. I asked the man about it, who told me he had seized it for debt, and expected soon to get leave from the Court to sell it. I made a few more inquiries, and was almost certain it was the same cob of which John Jones, who then trained the Prince of Wales's chasers, had spoken, telling me it was a "rum 'un" to ride, but a great jumper. A few days after that the house-agent led it up to my house and asked me to buy it. I said I must have a ride first, and got a saddle. As soon as I got near her the cob gave a squeal and went for me. The owner was terrified, but luckily there was a gardener on the premises who had been a groom, and between us we got on a saddle, and at last, seizing my chance, I got up. She was not really bad to sit -- in fact, squealing was her forte -- but there was a short and very steep avenue down from the house, and on that she fairly let herself go, and kicked her best, ending up by giving the gate-post one resounding bang that left a mark which



I saw was still there years after I had left the house. She soon settled down, and I rode her over a few fences and took her back. I bid the man ten pounds, which he refused with scorn, so I told him to take her away. Now, she had either made up her mind to stay with me, or there was something about the house-agent she did not like. Whenever he went towards her she screamed and he jumped; if he did not jump quickly enough, she swung round and lashed out at him. It was a very funny scene, and I really think the cob had a sense of humour and enjoyed it.

I have had many a horse trade since that morning, but never have I had a seller so completely at a disadvantage; in fact, I always felt I owed the cob something for the assistance she gave me in the deal. As he could not take her away, he took my tenner and the cob was mine.

It required a little self-confidence to buy her, but it nearly always requires that to pick up a cheap one of any sort. She was not a difficult mare to sit, and never really tried hard to get you off, seldom bucked and had no nasty tricks, such as trying to scrape her rider off against a wall. But she just kicked, and kicked from habit; it was tiring, I allow, but nothing else. She even gave that up to some extent.

I remember well the first day I rode her out hunting. It was with staghounds, and while we were waiting for the pack to be laid on, and she was just kicking a little to pass the time away, H. Ripley rode up and looked at her hard. He was at that time very well known between the flags, and one of the hardest men to hounds I have ever seen. After a long look he remarked to me: "So you have got that little mare. I owned her once. Take my advice and kill her before she kills you." I was really glad that hounds came up just then and prevented further conversation. She went well that day and every other. I have owned many a high-class brilliant hunter since, but not a great many better ones, and certainly never a sounder one. She was very good-looking, with a perfect forehead, and had quite a nice turn of speed.



She proved a most valuable riding master to me for this reason: she was always a little shifty, yet if ridden strongly, quietly, and carefully at a fence, she seldom or never refused. The least carelessness she noticed and took advantage of. On the other hand, if you made any extra effort to rouse her with hands, whip, or legs, you only aroused her suspicion that there was something extra nasty to jump, and she refused. She had been grossly overfaced and forced into impossible fences.

Now, I hold that learning to put a horse strongly and quietly at a fence is a very important matter, and that she taught me. A horse should be made to feel with hands and knees that he cannot "cut it," but should never be hustled or excited.

I never rode her in the Midlands, but, besides riding her with foxhounds in Surrey, I rode her with the Epsom Drag, with staghounds, and the Windsor Drag when it came our side. There was plenty of competition, and we managed to hold our own. I remember once being rather proud of her. I was returning after a ride with the drag, in company with some jockeys, and they began trying to ride over a seat. It was not high, but narrow, and of course there was nothing to keep a horse from running out. She was the only one that did it. I was down, with her on me, several times, and once I was pulled, at a thick place, clean over her quarters, and although I fell against her heels, she never touched me.

After a time I bought a stable companion for her, another ten-pounder, a little thoroughbred mare, with rather straight shoulders and a sad lack of brains. She, however, gave me much instruction in the art of falling, and one must not expect too much for ten pounds. I only mention her because I thought the cob's temper rather improved after her arrival. I always hold that loneliness must be bad for horses, who are the most sociable of animals. If a horse is turned out in a field by himself he hates it; if there are any horses grazing within sight he will spend nearly all his time looking at them from the nearest point he can reach, because he feels lonely.





Note, too, how worried many a horse gets when his stable companion goes out; he watches for its return, and will, on recognising its step at an incredible distance, begin to call to it, settling down at once on its return. It may be argued that such worrying is bad for a horse, but I would reply that it is quickly over (all outward signs of it passing off if the companion is out for any time), while the pleasure at the return is so evident as to emphasise the craving which all horses appear to have for companionship.

In the Argentine I have often come in from a journey or long day's work with cattle on a horse that was really beat and hungry. Stable management was simple. All that one did was to scrape the saddle sweat with the back of one's big knife and turn loose; but no matter how tired the horse was, he would trot about the home "potrero" until he found his companions, and never settled down to rest or feed until he had done so. Yet men building or altering stables often go to considerable extra expense to doom their horses to loneliness. Solitary confinement is the most terrible punishment that can be inflicted on man, and I greatly fear that horses, although they cannot tell us so, suffer but little less. I think it tends to make the bad-tempered horse worse, and the nervous one more nervous.

But to return to the cob. I hunted her for some seasons, and she was always fit; but she remained vicious in the stable, and very difficult to shoe or clip. Eventually I gave her to a friend to breed from, and after two peaceful years she gave her last squeal and died to feed foxhounds. She never had a foal -- maybe just as well with such a temper -- but her make and shape made it, I thought, worth risking.

The moral of the cob seems to me: Never be afraid of risking a cheap one because you think you may not be able to ride it; and, as a second moral, by riding all sorts you educate yourself and improve your horsemanship.

The next interesting mare I owned was Friendship. That was in 1894, and I had acquired a good deal of experience in the intervening years. Now, the cob's





temper was, I think, the result to a great extent of teasing and bullying; Friendship's was born with her. The cob taught me a great deal; Friendship received her entire education from me.

I first saw her as an unnamed three-year-old in Essex (she was bred in Ireland). She came up in the most gentle and friendly way (she always had a kind and confiding eye), and after letting me rub her nose, suddenly whipped round and lashed out. When she was four, my Essex friend, for whom I rode many young ones, wrote and said they had begun to break her, but found her so vicious that unless I cared to take her he would have her shot. I consulted my stout-hearted groom, Peter Grant, who seemed quite ready to take her on, so I sent for her.

I may say here that from first to last she remained incurably vicious in the stable. No one could "do" her but Grant, and, although she got very fond of him, she broke his ribs at least once. Breaking her was not all plain sailing, but she came to hand in time. She had a perfect mouth and lovely paces, so she took very little out of me, and luckily she never put me off, although she tried very, very hard, and gave me many a rough seat. This gave me confidence in the battles that were to come out hunting, and helped to defeat her. My first reference to her in my hunting diary is in October 1894, when, after telling of the doings of the Meynell hounds, with whom I was hunting, I add: "Rode Friendship, who went as badly as a horse can go." So it went on; some days she would go fairly well, but more often she did nothing but refuse, buck, and kick. At last things came to a head. I had pretty well made up my mind to give her up and send her for hounds to eat, and carelessly rode her at a very small fence close to a gate people were going through. She refused, and I went through the gate. I should not have done this unless I had despaired of her, for riding at a fence so placed is wrong, and letting off a refuser is worse, and I was soon to have a practical lesson in the harm I had done. We were striding nicely along in the very next field. She was fresh and untired, the going was sound and horses were galloping beside her. Suddenly she shut off steam and stopped dead. I spurred her and she retaliated by



trying to get hold of my feet with her teeth. Now, I can keep my temper with a young one, but when it does go, it goes pretty completely. I just let her stand still for a minute, and we were soon alone, as no stragglers or second horsemen were coming that way. "Now, my lass," I said, "we will fight this to a finish." Then, letting her head go more or less (I knew she could not buck me off), I devoted all my strength to punishment. At it we went, she bucking and kicking, I letting her have it with whip and spur. I don't know how long it took, but she tired at last and accepted her defeat. Then we went on and soon found hounds. For the rest of the day she never turned her head again, and from that day onwards she began slowly and steadily to improve. Even when she did refuse, she refused without her old determination. When I left the Meynell that winter I sent her to Leicester with my other horses. They sold well enough, but there was no bid for Friendship, only, as she was run up, a decided movement to the rear, "according to plan," of onlookers and buyers, for she had established quite a reputation in the yard by kicking anyone who wanted to look her over out of her box. So I had to keep her, and I am very glad I did. She kept on improving, and carried me very well in the Grafton country, which is by no means an easy one to cross. I recollect one day when they were on their woodland side, and few were out, seeing a very good hunt on her in which she gave me great satisfaction. It was rather foggy -- a day on which it was necessary to cling closely to hounds if one was to see them at all. Just as they were settling to run really hard, we came on one of those high hairy bullfinches so common in the Grafton country. For a moment it seemed impregnable; then I spotted a place I thought might do. My ex-refuser went for it like a lion, and after a struggle we emerged somehow in the next field without an actual fall. I was just in time to catch a glimpse of the flying pack, the great dog hounds looking as big as bullocks in the mist. We made a six-mile point, the latter part of it as straight as a Roman road, and hounds ran so fast that, unless my mare had bored that hole, nobody would have seen the way they went. It is surely worth while, let me remark in passing, to keep a little extra in hand for such emergencies. If horses are often shoved into such fences when not actually



necessary, they will take to refusing. Alas! youth does not always know when it is or is not necessary, and old ones who have learnt the lesson have lost their dash -- the glorious dash and go of youth!

I often think of Friendship when I hear it laid down that no horse is ever vicious unless made so by man. But I never contradict, for it is an admirable sentiment, and true in ninety cases or more out of a hundred. But as far as Friendship was concerned, if Grant erred at all in his management of her, he was too good and kind to her.

I consider Friendship a good example of what perseverance can do, for in her second season she was a fair hunter and steadily improved. By some strange chance I have kept two old letters which go to prove how good she became. As a nine-year-old she developed an unsoundness, and I sent her over to the Grafton kennels to be shot. I was away at the time, and Tom Bishop, then hunting the Grafton, was very anxious to keep her to breed from, against my advice. I have a letter from Major Wiseman, of Eastcote, saying he would give the use of his horse Delandre, adding: "Bishop says she is one of the best he ever saw out hunting." So I gave her to Bishop, and have his letter thanking me and speaking of her in the same way.

The moral to be derived from Friendship is, I think, when dealing with a bad one, stop and have it out; never mind the hunt for once, but fight to a finish. Avoid disagreement and punishment as you would avoid poison; but if it must come to a fight, then let it be a fight to a finish, and if you do not come out a winner, don't go on with the horse.





#### CHAPTER IV.

Brave son of Belzoni, be true to your breeding,  
Sustain old traditions, remember your sires.

EGERTON WARBURTON.

It is generally admitted that it is difficult to find men who can ride four-year-olds to hounds really well and carefully, men who can turn the raw material, a four-year-old, into the finished article, a hunter with manners.

That being so, considering the number of riding men who try, we may fairly argue that it is not a perfectly easy process, and I think I may be able to give a few hints which to a novice in hunter-making will be useful

There is no manner of doubt that a lad who wants to ride four-year-olds in the making, and ride them well, must have good nerves, a strong seat and fine hands. Anyone who is reckless and excitable is almost sure to fail, for he will get his four-year-old into difficulties and lose its confidence. Here we have the cause of a great, if not the greatest, trouble in finding good riders of four-year-olds; it is so hard to find a man with iron nerves who is free from a tendency to recklessness.

However, if a lad has not good nerves he will not enjoy riding young ones, and if it is not more or less a joy to him, he will never do much good at it. Bad or indifferent nerves very quickly react on the young horse; some small thing frightens him, a wild bound across the road is the result. If that startles the rider, the pupil is conscious of it at once, and it makes him more nervous; but if the rider sits still and is quite unperturbed, the youngster





soon settles. I always used to jeer at them and tell them not to be idiots, for I am a firm believer in the power of the human voice, and think that a horse very soon knows every change of tone. Most people know the story of the great Assheton Smith lending a good hunter to a friend, and to his disgust seeing the horse being pulled up as they approached some tall timber. One shout from the voice he knew sent the horse bounding over, in total disregard of his nervous rider's wishes.

"The Druid", too, in "Scott and Sebright", is very interesting on this point. "It is a pretty general opinion", he writes, "among trainers that horses cannot tell one person from another except by the voice, and that in this respect they are like fairy 'Fine Ear'. Ellerdale, for instance, took no notice of Tom Dawson when he went to see her at Admiral Harcourt's some four or five years after she had left his stable; but the moment he said "Coachman", she wheeled round and struck at him quite viciously. Mentor was quite as odd this way, and he proved pretty well that the dislike arises from the association of the voice with the orders at exercise". The paragraph closes with the remark: "Meretrix became so fidgety from hearing Fobert's voice at exercise that he was obliged to employ a code of stick and hand signals to the boy".

I used the voice a great deal, and often sung or whistled to a young one when he was in an irritable or nervous state. It seems to soothe them, and reminds me of a story against myself, which would go to prove that horses are not severe critics where the voice is concerned. I was riding home with a friend after a big hunt with the Devon and Somerset staghounds. We had a twenty-mile ride, and his horse was very beat, and we had to go slowly. Conversation had run down and I asked him, to pass the time away, if he would like a song or a recitation. He rashly chose a song, and although almost as soon as I began he hurriedly said he had changed his mind and would like a recitation, I carried on and finished my song. After a silence my companion in a thoughtful and worried tone remarked that he feared his horse was more beat than he had imagined. I foolishly asked him why? "Well", he said,



"he must be terribly beat, for he made only a faint effort to trot on and get away from your song". But this does not affect my argument as to the voice being of great use in training young horses, and only goes to prove that they accept the voice as they find it, and are not critical as to its timbre.

I well remember a far from pleasant Irish experience of mine bearing on the power of the voice. I was riding a farmer's horse that my host in County Limerick had borrowed for me. We did little in the morning, and although he seemed rather "reluctant" and sticky, I got him to jump the banks fairly well. Late in the day we found in a nice hill gorse and ran sharply along the hillside. The walls were tall and my mount refused persistently. I got him over three, but only after repeated refusals at each. By the time I reached the fourth wall the hunt had entirely vanished, for there were very few left out and the light was not good - "low visibility", as we should say now. The fourth wall was the tallest of any, and I abandoned the contest and made for a road, a sadder but not wiser man, for I felt certain the fault lay with me, although I could not tell where my horsemanship had failed. The owner's explanation was, if my memory serves me, as follows: "Sure, your honour, there is not a bigger lepped horse in Limerick, but if you meet a big wall you must let a shout out at him as you come in under it". With my belief in the power of the voice, I was quite ready to accept the explanation and leave it at that, but not so the owner. He was determined to bring home to me that properly ridden, or, rather, properly shouted at, his horse could jump. The next day I hunted, he brought him out, and where I went he went. Just as I put my horse at a fence, with a yell that only an Irishman could achieve, he rushed past me and generally jumped the exact spot I was aiming at. It was an annoying experience, not lessened by seeing the horse jumping exceedingly well for another man. I tried flattery and I tried expostulation, but without effect. He had come out to show me how his horse could jump, and he carried out his plan.

So I say, don't be afraid of using your voice; it may often prove of great value. I have heard it said



that when a man shouts at his horse, it shows his nerves are bad. But that's only fool talk; do the best you can for your young one, and never mind what people say or think about your nerves.

All young ones that are worth anything will want a "set to" at times; they only want a game of romps, just as a puppy does. If you let them go half across a field, bucking, kicking, and pretending to bolt, they are soon done with it and come to hand in a good temper. One must not, of course, encourage a young horse to play the fool, or it may become a habit or trick; but it is far better to let him have his fling than to hang on to his mouth. A young hunter, as long as he retains his mouth, can, as his education goes on, be taught anything and put just where you want him. But if the moment he shows any desire for a little play he is taken hard by the head, his mouth will very soon deteriorate.

In nothing are nerves so essential as in giving a youngster a good mouth. The nervous rider is always expecting his mount to "play up", and in order to check this tendency keeps him fast by the head, so that the young tender mouth is inevitably deadened and eventually quite spoilt. Then very often the last state of that rider is worse than the first, for a horse with a really hardened mouth can "set to", no matter how hard his rider hangs on to it.

Fortunately, young mouths that have been hardened can generally be got perfectly right, if taken in time and ridden with long reins and very light hands. I have at different times taken over the riding of four-year-olds whose mouths had been hardened and deadened, and who had grown used to an iron grip. Their surprise at not being taken hard by the head was almost comic, and it was clear to me that the grip was most expected when the pace was increased from walk to trot or from trot to canter. It was from this I argued that the iron grip was due to nerves, for in changing pace the rider naturally thought there was an increased chance of his mount bucking and kicking, so increased his grip to try and counteract the tendency. Such mouths with care, it is true, can be put





right, but they will never regain the silken perfection of mouths that have not known the heavy-handed nervous grip. No horse should ever be allowed to lean on the bit; that fault can always be cured.

Young horses soon get over their love of a game of romps, especially if kept in steady work, and here again the voice can be used with effect. Scold them when romping and bucking, just to show you do not really approve of it, but don't jerk them violently in the mouth or knock them about; treat them as you would a child. If you can retain the perfect mouth, it makes it so very much easier to "balance" your young one, and there we approach a very important point.

It is not easy to describe "balance", but if one goes to the ring-side at any good horse show, when riding classes for hunters are in the ring, one can see it by watching the men showing horses for the big dealers. Such men started with natural talent, we may be quite sure of that, or they would never have been given the riding to do; and this talent has been developed by riding all sorts of horses with all sorts of failings, and by many hours spent in preparing these very perfectly shaped horses for the ring. The combined result is that you see balance and manners in perfection. What balance is, must be learnt by experience; but if your horse passes easily from one pace to another, you may assume that he is at least fairly balanced. If he slugs along with his nose out, you may be sure he is not. Another test is ridge and furrow; only a well-balanced horse will cross that pleasantly. No horse can be well balanced unless his head is in the right place, neither too high nor too low, and with the nose neither stuck out nor tucked in. I always hold that it does not greatly matter where your hands are, as long as your horse's head is carried right.

One thing you can be certain of - if a man's horse in walking or trotting is constantly dropping behind or getting in front of his companions, that man does not balance his horse or ride him in the true sense. He is merely a passenger borne along





by his horse. It is very easy with the heel to keep a slow horse up, and with the hand to steady back a fast walker or trotter. It was to me always an instructive sight to watch the peons of Entre Rios when out for a ride or travelling. Whatever number were riding together, they moved in line with perfect "dressing". The reason was that they were horsemen to a man, each horse was balanced, and the fast walkers steadied back, the slow ones kept up. And so at every pace, trot or canter, the line was always kept. Many young Englishmen came out who could not ride and took no trouble to learn. The peons used to say of such, as they went straggling along, that they "travelled like wild geese".

If you have been able to balance your four-year-old nicely and to give him a perfect mouth, the battle is pretty well won. Remember never to take him by surprise. Don't suddenly shoot him from a walk to a trot; never, indeed, suddenly and without warning change the pace either to increase or decrease it. Give your horse warning with knees and rein, so that he goes off in a perfectly collected way. This is most important. In decreasing the pace I often used the voice as warning, saving the mouth from anything but a gentle pressure, which is then at once accepted save by very keen and eager horses.

You cannot make your young hunter too handy, and figures of eight done at the walk, trot, and canter, are useful, as indeed are all bending practices.

As to jumping, most well-shaped horses soon learn that. If opportunity offers, I would prefer that the young one should get his first lessons by having to go through a short run with a couple of strong timber jumps in it, when turned out to grass of a morning or evening. The timber at first can be laid on the ground and gradually raised to about four feet. In this way they take it coolly and as a matter of course, and know a good deal about jumping before you get on their backs. It also develops the jumping muscles.

Then, when the young one has come nicely to



hand, is well balanced and will do whatever you want, take him one day when not too fresh to a small and easy course and ride him round it, or better still, if you have a farm, ride him over a few small natural fences. Don't ride in spurs and avoid using a whip, but you may have just to show it to him. A good jumping ring, if available, is a useful adjunct. Use it a few times before you ride your young one over fences, and if during the progress of his jumping education he gives you trouble, put him back into the ring for a time or two, not too often. Recollect that the real jumping education and polish must be given from the saddle; you cannot make a horse take off exactly as you wish when driving him round a ring, nor can you direct him at any exact spot in the fence or prevent a slight swerve in the last stride. That slight swerve from the weak and selected spot in a strong fence which many a badly broken hunter makes just as he takes off is a very fruitful source of falls.

Always try to make your horse take his jump as a matter of course and without any excitement. He should, if possible, be taught to hop over a fence with as little fuss as when he changes pace from walk to trot or trot to canter. That is why it is so important to give all the first jumping lessons when your horse is not fresh or above himself. And, above all, never bring a horse up to a fence without making it perfectly clear to him that he is expected to jump it.

If you take a young horse by surprise, he will certainly either refuse or jump badly. There is no doubt a little knack or skill required to make it quite clear to your horse that he has got to jump, and yet to do this without in any way exciting him.

It is quite easy to rouse a horse for a jump by an application of the whip or spurs, or by other exciting moves of the arms or legs, but that of all things is what you want to avoid with a young one. It is also easy to trot or canter a horse up to a



fence without giving any indication that you expect him to jump it. He will then come up to it quite coolly, but most likely will not understand what you want him to do; he will only realise in the last stride or two that it is a question of jumping, and the result will be either a refusal or a bad, scrambling sort of jump.

Both ways are bad, over-rousing and exciting the worst of the two. A better way is this: just feel his mouth, possibly bringing his head up an inch or two, at the same time get a really strong clip on him with your knees and let that knee pressure increase as you near the fence. Then a slight, almost invisible movement of the hands (always have both on the reins), and a word of cheer, and your young one will take off exactly right, sail over his fence, enjoying it as much as you do.

These first jumping lessons should be given in a thick plain snaffle. That, in my opinion, is also far the best bit for the first few days with the hounds; after that a rider can consult his own individual taste. Young horses can hardly be ridden too slowly at their fences. So ridden, they jump off their hocks and learn to measure their fences accurately. I never hurried a young one even at water. Later, when they have learnt their business, you can increase the pace. With a smooth snaffle you lessen the risk of a painful "job" in the mouth, which the strongest-seated man may unintentionally deal to his horse if he jumps in some unexpected way or pecks heavily. There is no such fruitful source of refusals as a nasty "job" on the jaws of a young horse, or indeed of an old one. Each man of experience has his own ideas about riding young horses to hounds. Personally I always tried to do without a lead and to get at the fences where nobody else was riding at them. I never liked a lead, and hold that a young horse learns more in jumping half a dozen fences on his own than dozens of fences when following other horses. If you follow a man in order to get the benefit of a lead, you must keep fairly close to him or somebody else may cut in. You are also bound to see him safe into the next field before you set your





horse going. The result may be that you have to hurry your young one or, if your leader dwells at the fence, have to pull him out of his stride, both equally bad for him.

That your leader, no matter how good he is, may refuse or fall is another consideration, for in either case he ceases to be of any value to you. On the whole, then, it is far better, when possible, to get a clear front and find your own way over fences.

If a horse is at all excitable he is apt to jump in a wild hurried way when after another, while if alone he will judge the fence for himself and jump in a much more collected style.

If the above suggestions for preliminary schooling cannot be carried out, a young one can often be made into a good hunter without them. I have taken out four-year-olds with hounds, which I had not the chance to school beforehand, and which to my certain knowledge had not been schooled in any way. In such a case you should begin carefully, and feel your way as to the fences to take on for the first few days you are out. A pack of harriers is far the best school for making young hunters, for as a rule the field is not a large one, so that your young one has a better chance to watch hounds - an enormous advantage. There is no lead like a pack of hounds: horses love to be near them when running. Then again, if things do go wrong, they don't get away from you as foxhounds do, for it is rare for a hare to make much of a point.

Horses vary so much that no fixed laws can be laid down for evolving the perfect hunter, and it may be a comfort to anyone who has failed in schooling a young one at home if I give an instance of such a failure which resulted in a very fine performer. The case in point was a well-bred mare which a friend of mine had bought in Ireland and asked me to ride and "make" for him. The first thing I rode her at was a small ditch, the worst kind of jump, I may add, to select for such a purpose, but it happened to come handy. She did not show much temper, but simply



would not jump, and I only got her over with the help of men and ropes. I had no school handy round which I could drive her, but otherwise tried everything I knew. I can honestly say that although I got her through a few fences, she never really jumped one. I was at that time busy with a lot of young horses, and as she was learning nothing I gave up the contest and simply rode her about occasionally and got her handy. Late in October I took her out with hounds in a good grass country, and, I must admit, felt far from confident. In such circumstances one always gets a good start. I did, and felt I must at least have a feeble try to go. I sailed down at the first fence, not a conspicuously small one, and to my delight she took off just right and jumped it like a stag. That was good enough for me, and away I went, and she never turned her head or made a mistake. We only ran for ten minutes, but from that morning she went steadily on and was soon an accomplished hunter. I expect there was some history to account for her dislike of jumping in cold blood - most likely when schooling she had got cast and frightened and had then defeated some rough rider who tried to make her jump. In the excitement of being with hounds she forgot all this.

I remarked above that a ditch is a bad fence to begin with - the young horse sees a gleam of water that frightens him. He stops and nearly slips in and then is really terrified. I have seen more young horses stuck up at small ditches than any other form of fence.

Of course horses vary in the making according to their breeding. As a rough rule, the commoner bred ones come more quickly and easily to hand. My own experience has lain chiefly among young Irish horses. I have ridden them of all sorts for other people, but for myself always went for very well-bred ones, nearly but not quite clean bred. Such horses soon learn their business as hunters, nearly, but not quite, as quickly as common-bred ones.

Quite clean-bred ones, out of training, in my experience take much longer to make, and are apt



to get upset over some trifle which throws them back and delays their education just when they seem to be coming nicely to hand. They very often can be bought cheaply enough, but, unless you have a first-class stud groom, are best left alone. They require more skilful stable management than half-breds, and are more delicate as a rule and more nervous.

Be careful, if your four-year-old proves a bold, big jumper, not to overface him. If you ride at fences so big that he cannot jump them or can only get over with a fall, he will lose confidence in you. What you want to do is to build up his confidence so that he will face, and face with good will, any fence you put him at. Then if he goes on right, gets experience and gets fit, towards the end of the season may come a glorious day when hounds race for twenty-five or thirty minutes over a big, fair country, and your four-year-old, full of courage and dash, with blind confidence in you, going just where you want and how you want, fairly and squarely has the best of it all the way. He knows he is leading the lot and is proud of it, and who can blame you if you are very proud of him?

One must not be too hard on four-year-olds, but once you have got them really fit, a light-weight can see great sport on them, especially if the going is not too deep. A keen lad is apt to keep them out too long and take them out too often. This tells on them and is apt to develop a weak spot. If they have shown lameness, give them a little time after they are quite sound again; it will pay you in the end, even if you have to stay at home when sport is good.

I once saw a very good and severe hunt well on a four-year-old that had never before been out hunting, save one half-day in the woods during which he never saw a fence, but then he had condition. He was full of old oats and had been doing a lot of dog-cart work, and fast work at that. Many years afterwards, when reading with interest 'The History of the Meynell', I came across a re-





ference to this hunt from which the reader might infer I had grossly overridden my mount. But he came home quite gaily and was sold fairly well at auction not long afterwards, so we may assume he was sound. The reference is as follows:

"It was a first-rate run - a nine-mile point in fifty-five minutes. There is unluckily no record of it that goes at all into details, but Mr. W. Fraser-Tytler was one of those who saw it well on a four-year-old of Mr. Fort's, which was never any good afterwards".

Whether the four-year-old turned out well or ill I never heard, but after the first two or three fences he went well that day and only fell once. But most emphatically that is not the sort of hunt you want the first time you introduce a young horse to hounds.

Dick Fort, as he was so often called, was for many years Master of the Meynell. His horses always had the best of everything and his stable management was excellent. But whether between the shafts of his dog-cart on the road, or between his legs as hunters, they had to 'go', and I have never ridden a four-year-old that was in harder condition. A good and gallant sportsman, it was always a joy to see him ride to hounds and a pleasure to see him sit on a horse, for his seat was a perfect one. He was killed in 1918 by a fall over wire.

I have often had keen young ones who had got quite pleasant and steady with hounds, and have then dropped in for a really quick thing with them when they were set going in earnest. The next day they hunted they would be as wild as a hawk. It is a good plan, if you want to give a very keen one manners, not to loose him off two hunting days in succession. It requires a good deal of self-restraint to carry it out, but if, after a real good 'go', you take things very easily the next day you have him with hounds, his manners will benefit. He will recognise that hunting is not a





succession of point-to-points and won't always be on his toes ready for a start.

I think I have said enough to show that the making of four-year-olds can be a very entertaining amusement for a young man with good nerves who can ride a bit. If he has to hunt 'on the cheap', he will see more sport on one or two screws than on one or two four-year-olds; but the latter, once made, if the right material has been bought, become valuable and high-class hunters. The screw, on the other hand, becomes more screwy and worthless year by year. Most men who make hunters find that the ones they have made to their own hands are far more perfect conveyances than any hunter they buy.

Another thing that a lad with limited means and a very small stud should bear in mind is this: if you make one or two four-year-olds well for yourself, you will soon have people in your hunt asking you to ride their four-year-olds or other troublesome horses for them. This greatly helps out a small stud, and enables you to get out hunting when a run of bad stable luck may otherwise keep you kicking your heels at home. It is a good rule never to refuse any mount offered to you, no matter how bad its reputation. It all gives you experience, and very soon you should develop an instinct for the really dangerous ones. If you find yourself on one that simply cannot be kept on his legs, you can play light and go gently on him for a few days (there are certain fences over which no horse can fall; confine yourself to them), and then return the horse with thanks. Even such a one will have taught you something. The horses to dread, young or old, are the ones that cannot 'put in a short one', who cannot get their stride right for the fence. Such horses are always dangerous, no matter how slowly or carefully you ride them at fences. They will jump half a dozen well and then get their stride wrong, often at strong timber, and give you a heavy fall. Fortunately this class of horse is not often met with, but in extreme cases no amount of schooling or falling seems to cure them.



I could ramble on about riding four-year-olds for many a page, but will only add in favour of my contention that it is a fascinating amusement that, although nearly three-score and rather the worse for wear, I still enjoy a ride on one. And in conclusion I would impress these things on the novice: be very patient, very gentle, but utterly determined that your young one shall never defeat you; ride with long reins and never hang on to his head; always make your intentions clear to him, and never take him by surprise.

-----ooOoo-----



## CHAPTER V.

One sez, "Moy 'oss a wunna joomp"; another sez,  
Will your 'oss joomp? fur if a will, Oi wish as  
Sez Oi, "Oi niver 'oss'd afore, bur louk oup, fur  
And Smiler med a rood roight threough and landed  
on his nooze.

Derbyshire Hunting Song: F. COTTON.

It is often said that horses are not fond of jumping. My opinion is that, if properly trained, ridden, and bitted, they are just as fond of it as they are of trotting down a road or of any other work they have to do for their living. In some cases they are obviously very fond of it.

As a rule, refusing with sound, fresh horses is due to the bit. But as soon as a horse gets worn and groggy on his legs he is apt to refuse. He hates the jar of landing over a fence, and never jumps well until warmed up. If you don't believe in the bit theory, stay and watch a "field" come over some fence which everybody has to jump. It is surprising how many of the men's horses get a more or less severe "job" in the mouth. Ladies' horses come off better, or did in side-saddle days, for then, owing to their seat, they had to keep their reins long, and so few men do that.

When a horse receives his rider's weight in his mouth it must be uncomfortable - one may well say painful. Ten to sixteen stone attached to his mouth with reins and a sharp bit, swaying about as he jumps (the actual connection with the saddle being of a slight and perfunctory nature), cannot be popular





with any horse. They must look forward to jumping under such conditions much as we look forward to a visit to the dentist. The dentist theory will account, too, for so many horses hating to jump in cold blood that will jump readily when out hunting. In their keenness and excitement they forget the pain, just as we hardly notice a blow or cut received in the rush and rattle of a polo match or hunt, yet wince and complain at far less pain inflicted on us while sitting quietly in the dentist's chair. Obviously, then the more severe the bit the greater the pain an indifferent or bad rider can inflict, so that, unless we are such perfect horsemen that we can be certain of never hurting a horse's mouth unintentionally, the mildest bit in which we can ride a horse should be the one to select. It is fairly easy to leave a mouth alone when you can canter down to a fence and take it in your stride, but at a nasty cramped bottom, where a clever horse slides half-way down the bank and then jumps suddenly, it is another matter. In such and like difficulties the mild bit has a great advantage.

I have seen, too, even good horsemen fail and touch their horses' mouths when they have to jump out of a road almost from a stand. One of the clearest cases I ever knew of refusing from the bit was that of a certain black pony, the cleverest and laziest of his kind, that belonged in turn to me and various members of my family. I could not go so far as to say he was fond of jumping, for all forms of exercise were repugnant to him; but I think if one could have explained to him that some exercise was good for his health and left the choice to him, he would have selected jumping exercise. One day a lady wished to ride him over a little "made course," and although assured he would not pull, begged for a curb bridle to be put on him. Now, he had certainly never hardened his mouth by "taking hold," and at one of the fences she gave him a sharp, unintentional "job" in the mouth. He would not jump again for her, nor did he ever again jump properly for anybody. That seemed very good proof to me of what the bit misapplied can do. Of course, he could have been put right with much trouble, but he was an old pony when it happened, and nobody greatly cared whether he jumped or not.



An interesting remark bearing on this subject was made to me by a sailor who had been going very straight on a big, bold-jumping horse. On my admiring his horse's, and incidentally his own, performance, for I love to see a brave man, he replied: "He is a splendid jumper, and nearly jumps me off at some fences, for he will snatch at the reins and nearly pulls them out of my hands just before he takes off". Now, they were a very brave pair, the rider brave but ignorant, the horse brave and knowledgeable. The sailor, no doubt, had dealt him certain hard blows on the jaw when being nearly jumped off, so the old horse took steps to establish a good length of rein before he took off, instead of refusing, as a less gallant one would have done.

I maintain, then, that the mild bit is a great preventive of refusals. For myself, I swear by snaffles, and have practically ridden every horse I have ever owned in them - thick, ringed snaffles, smooth if possible, and if you must have a twist in them, and I found I often needed it, let them still be thick and ringed.

I know there is still a prejudice against them, but they are much more common now than they were thirty years ago. In those days, in looking round a big field in the Midlands, I often failed to see any snaffle but my own, and I was constantly asked why I used them - so constantly that I fear my replies were often more curt than explanatory, especially if I had failed to get a start or if things had gone wrong with me. Of course, in Ireland they have always been the favourite bit. Ask the men who cross Ireland best if they can do it in severe bits.

When it comes to curing a horse of refusing, other things besides biting have to be thought of. Horses have good memories, and if you buy a horse from a man who has accepted defeat time after time, it may take long to get these memories out of his head.

If you want to cure a horse of refusing you must never let him off. First give him a good deal of work in the jumping ring, and punish him when he stops and refuses. After the ring, ride him in schooling at



fences that you can force him over, or, if the worst comes to the worst, pull him over with ropes. When you take him out hunting don't overface him, and be careful never to ride him at a fence near a gate which people are passing through. When he does refuse, stick to it and get him over. It is far better to lose one run and defeat him than to lose your place in many by riding a confirmed refuser. Of course there are certain fences over which it is impossible to force a horse. If I entirely failed I always let the horse know I was very angry with him and punished him. I have found this plan answer more than once. Horses are clever enough, and know perfectly why they are being punished.

I remember bitterly and well a case in point during a good hunt with the Bicester. I was riding a queer-tempered, clean-bred mare, when at a little brook about ten or twelve feet wide she refused and fairly defeated me, costing me the hunt. We had not been running for long, but in coming down to the brook we had crossed some charming flying fences, over which she had been jumping very big, covering, I would dare to say, at least sixteen to twenty feet at each; that made the "stick-up" even harder to bear and more trying to the temper. I feared I should never be able to depend on her again, and as I had no means of pulling her over, I had to turn away; but before doing so I determined to administer a terribly severe hiding. I knew that with such a mare it was probably a case of "make or mar," "kill or cure," but she was not a nervous one, and I risked it. The case went in my favour and the verdict was "made" and "cured." The very next day I hunted her we "met," as our Irish friends say, a much bigger brook, and although a man refused just in front of her, my mare swung over it in her stride, nor did she ever again give trouble at water or any other description of fence. It was, however, an exceptional case, and such severe punishment should only be resorted to when other means have entirely failed. Refusers, of course, vary greatly in their habits, but my experience is that the horse who refuses far back from a fence seldom gives much trouble. The pig who stops in the last stride, with his chest almost against the fence, is the most difficult one to defeat.





A cutting whip is of great value with bad-tempered refusers. Horses that will stop and kick like furies when spurred will often give in to an application of the cutting whip. It does not seem to upset their tempers in the same way as the spur. It is also of use in making sticky, short-jumping horses jump out - more useful, possibly, with such horses than with any others.

But the cutting whip is of no use unless you know how to pick it up and use it when picked up. The picking up must be done like lightning, and as you pick it up, say, with the right hand, enough of the right-hand rein must be passed into the left hand to keep a level bearing on the horse's mouth. If as you pick up your whip you let one rein go slack, of course your horse will swerve from the whip and run out.

Then, when you do hit, hit hard and close behind the girth. It is a brutal thing to hit a horse far back. To use a whip properly and with either hand requires quite a little practice. But for any lad who is going in for riding all sorts of horses, it is well worth learning, and all, except the actual stroke, can be practised at any time when riding about on quiet horses. Once learnt it is not forgotten, and may often come in useful in hunt or point-to-point races. It should be easy enough to get an amateur or professional jockey to show the best way of picking up the whip.

A cutting whip properly applied is very useful with a queer-tempered horse that "sits up" with you on the road. If you watch closely you can generally detect signs of the coming trouble; then, before he has quite stopped, let him have it once, but as hard as you can deliver it. Very often a wild bound takes the horse past the spot he had intended to select for his battle-ground, and surprise and pain puts the whole thing out of his head. But the blow should be given quickly and without warning. Surprise is as great an advantage in a horse fight as in any other kind of battle.

Probably in nothing so much as riding refusers, do hands come in - hands and determination, the power of





putting your whole body and will into it.

I remember once, years ago, standing by the open ditch at a small country meeting. Four horses came along, and one, a chestnut mare, stuck in her toes and cut it. Arthur Nightingale, then at the top of the tree, was riding her, and I watched him closely. He gave her two of the best as he took her back just far enough to give her a run, turned her round and drove her at it. Both hands on the reins, the mare seemed held in a vice, and it was easy to see that almost every muscle of that powerful jockey's body was at work; one noted the grim determination in the face, but could only wonder what the lateral pressure per square inch on that mare's ribs amounted to. She got over the big fence, one of the most obviously reluctant I have ever seen forced into the air. I walked away confirmed in my opinion that the winning-post is not the only interesting spot on a racecourse.

When fighting a horse, either a refuser or a "mean" horse who has stuck up with you in the road, look out for a moment when he wavers in his determination; such a moment nearly always comes, and if you are ready for it and exert all your muscle and will-power, you win. Allow it to pass, and the fight will go on. The man, who loves horses and is constantly riding all sorts develops an instinct which helps him at such times. I have watched a fight and felt inclined to yell out "Now!" when the horse appeared to me to waver. As often as not, if the rider had not the true instinct, he would select that moment to blow his nose or otherwise rest from his exertions.

The greatest success I ever had with a refuser was with a seven-year-old chestnut horse that I bought from a friend. He had not hunted him and did not pretend to know much about him, but he did remark that he would not jump in cold blood, and had evidently been defeated by him. I got the horse home and took him for a ride, with no intention of asking him to jump. I was trotting him round a field, when we suddenly came on a tiny ditch, no bigger than many a cart rut, running out



from the hedge.

We were on it before I saw it, and he stopped dead. I sat there and thought. I did not want a fight the first day I rode him yet I could hardly believe he would want more than a little pressure of the knee to make him walk over it. I applied the pressure, but any walking he did was backwards. I had got on to him directly after breakfast - the place was within a quarter of a mile of my house - and he crossed that ditch, if you could call it a ditch, just in time to enable me to get back to one-thirty lunch. I never knocked him about, but I kept at him all the time. The next time I had him in that field a very heavy-handed lad was walking him about, and on a call from me he turned him quickly round near a "made fence." The horse thought he was meant to jump it, and before the lad could stop him bounded over. It showed me he had learnt his lesson; he was never any trouble again and carried me well to hounds.

Another refuser, on which I had a quick success, gave far less trouble, and with him it was a clear case of refusing from fear of the bit. A friend of mine asked me to ride this young one, as it had been refusing badly with his lad. He himself had not ridden it, as it was not up to his weight. Now, my friend, the owner, always seemed to me to overbit his horses. He had fine light hands and they went all right with him, but I thought it probable that his groom carried out the overbitting without the light hands that compensated for it. So I asked to have the young one sent out for me in a plain snaffle, which was done.

The first little fence I rode him at he refused six times. Luckily for me, hounds were running very slowly and checking in almost every field. He refused the next few fences, but each one less often and with less determination. The last of about half a dozen small fences he only refused once, and for the rest of the day never turned his head. When next I rode him we got penned in a lane at the very start of a hunt, and a man began refusing at the only available place in the fence out of it. I was next to him and shouted out: "Come out of the way; I know mine will go!" - a cheerful and optimistic view of the case which I was far from feeling. Still, it would have been no good saying: "If you will allow me to try, there is just a vague chance mine might go." But go he did, and never turned his head again.



He was sold soon afterwards to a very hard man, and turned out an exceptionally good hunter. He was naturally fond of jumping, or he would not have come right so soon, and had merely been upset by bad riding and a severe bit.

The worst refuser of all to deal with is the nervous refuser, far worse than the horse which refuses from temper, which can generally be knocked out of him, or from previous bad riding, which can be put right by good and careful handling. It is no use knocking a nervous one about; you must just keep your temper and keep quietly at him. Even so, when they do jump they are apt to jump very badly and hurt themselves and possibly their rider.

I remember one such that I owned, a very beautiful thoroughbred mare. She was one of the biggest jumpers I have ever ridden, and had a curious knack of bringing her hind legs so sharply up when jumping that she sometimes struck the sole of my boot with her hoof. Yet that mare killed herself from nervousness at quite a small place, a small stake and bound fence with a ditch on the take-off side. She tried hard to stop, then at the last moment, finding she could not, she made a half-hearted jump at it and dropped on the fence. A small, sharp, live stake (those are the dangerous ones) went deeply in, and in spite of all our care, in two days it was all over. Poor mare, she bore me no ill-will, and would let no one else dress her wound.

Another very bad case of nerves was again a clean-bred mare, but I knew the root cause of that. She was bought out of training by a relative of mine, whose single idea when riding to hounds was, on any sort of horse under any sort of conditions, to try and go into every field with them. He took her out cub-hunting when the country was not fit to ride over, and she deposited herself upside down in a very big and very blind ditch. She never got over that. If all went well from the first, she was a very good hunter; but the slightest peck or mistake upset her, and you could not rely on her, and if she fell she was perfectly useless for the rest of the day. I suppose awful memories of that ditch returned to her, for





she had not turned her head before she fell into it. I bought her, but she never really improved, and although a good hunter on her day, I was very glad to get rid of her for what would have been a small part of her value had she been reliable.

There is, I fear, no safe and certain road to the cure of refusing, but if ridden in the way indicated, many horses can be cured, and none should become refusers while sound and fresh on their legs. Quiet, determined riding, mild bits, and care not to over-face horses are the best receipts.

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## CHAPTER VI.

When our blood ran rapidly and when  
Our bones were pliant and limber,  
Could we stand a merry cross-counter then,  
A slogging fall over timber.

LINDSAY GORDON.

To what extent men can learn to fall is an oft-disputed point. The Druid, in writing of Tilbury the dealer, says: "To take his tilbury into a field and turn it neatly over and step out of it, without the horse falling, was another sleight-of-hand diversion with the ribbons to which he was peculiarly partial." This would go to show that falling out of a trap can be reduced to an exact science. Still, I am bound to add that, although I have at different times upset a good many traps, I usually adopted the more popular method and fell out; only once can I remember landing neatly on my feet.

The peon in Entre Rios, when his horse fell or pecked from any cause, would invariably open his legs, fly over its head and land on his feet. If a peon failed to do this, no matter what pace he was going, he was looked upon as a duffer. Their long seat (the toe merely in the stirrups), and the shape of their "recado" or saddle, all helped them to bring off this trick. Moreover, they came away the moment a horse pecked, which one does not wish to do when hunting. When riding to hounds, then, I don't think one can emulate Mr. Tilbury or the peon. But by keeping a cool head and knowing just what your horse is doing, one can often save oneself to a great extent. If a horse fairly gets his knees under timber or a strong stake and bound, it is no good sitting tight. The quicker the rider realises his position and comes away from his horse the better, and a quick wriggle when on the ground may save him a crushing from his horse.



If a horse drops his hind legs in an ordinary ditch or on a fence, it is generally right for a light-weight to sit tight and stay in the saddle; but if he drops his hind legs in a brook, bottom, or very deep ditch, be off him in a flash or he may fall back, and his rider is then in a dangerous position.

Falling well comes with practice, and a lad who rides all sorts of horses and tries to go on them is sure to get a certain amount of practice; but I fear there are some kind of falls which no skill can soften, and of these, falls over wire are, of course, the worst and most dangerous. Still, a lad who keeps his head and knows exactly what is going on when he falls has the best chance of escaping unhurt. I have heard men dispute as to whether it is a good thing to cling to the reins when down or not. I cannot see two sides to this question. If you roll to the end of your reins you are quite far enough away from your horse for safety, and the only argument I ever heard advanced in favour of letting go is that if a man does so, he can get quite clear and his horse cannot tread on him or kick him. While the reasons for holding on are more numerous, there is one conclusive and overwhelming one: if you fall and let go in a really fast, good hunt, you are out of it, utterly and miserably out of it, and only a certain number of such hunts come to each of us in our hunting lives. But if a man keeps a grip of his reins when he falls and is quickly up, he need only lose a few lengths, need not lose his place, much less the hunt.

I never used patent clips that release the stirrup when you fall, and have been hung up in my stirrups many times without being hurt, as I had the reins. Patent clips are best if you can't be sure of keeping your reins, but they often come open when you do not want them to do so, and your stirrups are sadly apt to remain in a brook after rider and horse have emerged.

Holding on to the reins when you fall has to be learnt, as the natural instinct is to put out your open hands to break your fall. Still, it can be learnt. I don't know if it comes easily to some men; I know I fell pretty often before I could make certain of holding on every time; but if you have got it well rammed into





your head that you must hold on, your first thought as you hit the ground is: "Have I got them?" That being so, you can generally snatch the reins before your horse has time to move, if in the shock of falling you have let them go.

Once at a Sunday luncheon party I made some such remark, and a youth who had never done much hunting assured me he found that to hold on to his reins was sheer instinct -- so strong indeed was this instinct that I gathered he could not let go even if he wanted to. That was a Sunday. On Monday he fell close beside me, a gentle fall of whose coming he had ample warning, for the horse blundered on for a length or two. Yet for once, it appeared, the instinct was not in working order, and the horse trotted away. I could have caught it, but fear I was brutal enough to make little or no effort to do so, as I thought some work on foot might revive the instinct, or at least prevent its being so much in evidence on Sundays.

In falling, the main thing is to keep your head, know just what your horse is doing, and be ready to take advantage of any chance to save yourself. Don't sit too tight when it's a decided and hopeless fall, and if your horse has been on your leg and foot, give them a quick shake as he rises. The fall may have pressed stirrup and foot into the mud, and it then requires a good shake to get the stirrup off the boot.

I saw a good instance of quickness once at Punchestown, and although it has not an actual bearing on hunting falls, it was interesting. An enormous field had started for a farmers' race. At the second fence, as they poured up the course towards the stand, a horse out with a lead fell. I had my glass on him, and the jockey was up at once. He seemed to recognise that he was right in the middle of the course, that the horses were too close on him to give him any chance to get to one side or the other. In another second he was down, presenting his stern to the oncoming rush of horses, and tucking his head in almost between his knees, clasped his two hands behind it to protect the base of the skull. All was done like lightning, and then he was lost to sight in the tearing rush of horses. An English friend,



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not quite realising the position, said to me: "That man is knocked silly"; while on the other side came the soft Irish drawl of a complete stranger: "I think he's knocked damn wise." It seemed incredible that in such a "field," so bunched together, not a horse should have touched him; and if he had not tucked himself up into the smallest possible space, it would have been impossible. As the lad walked up the course unhurt I felt that the Irish stranger's reflection on the incident was fairly correct.

Falls of all sorts will have much less effect on the man who keeps himself fit and hard. Swedish exercises done every morning keep the muscles limber and greatly lessen their effect. Of course, falls ought to be avoided, but I have known men who took pride in having a great number; these, however, were never good men to hounds. I remember one keen young soldier who felt he had not really done his best unless he had taken about forty falls by Christmas. Needless to say, in spite of his bravery, he seldom or never saw a hunt, and his over-faced horses constantly refused with him. But he must have mastered the art of falling, for I don't recollect that he was ever hurt. However, that is not the way to ride to hounds. If you fall often, it is well to begin to question what is wrong with your method of riding at fences.

Good hands and horsemanship on the rider's part, good shoulders on the horse's, are the best insurance against falls; and, after all, they waste time when hounds are running and, save in exceptional circumstances, do your horse no good.

As I said before, far the worst falls are those we get over wire. No shoulders can save you then, and the best and bravest go down in a nasty-looking heap through no fault of their own. Wire that pulls out when you get into it is the worst of all, and many a horse gets so cut up by it that he has to be killed. Wire, when it is marked or can be seen, is nearly always best avoided, but if it is nailed along the top of timber, you are pretty sure to get over it if you ride at the post; in such a case, too, the horse most likely sees it. Again, if it runs along a hedge, not too near the



top, by riding at a thick place in the hedge you may expect to get over; but if a man goes in for that sort of thing, he must know how to fall and be ready to come away if his horse does make a mistake. You ought, too, to be on a very good horse, the sort of horse who will answer to you and will make an extra effort to jump clear when you ask for it. But with all that thrown in, jumping wire is best left to the young and hardy. As dear old Jorrocks says: "Still, a fall's a hawful thing. ....Dreadful thought! Vere's the brandy?"

One of the terrible disadvantages of wire is that where it exists one has to go craning and looking at the fences before you dare ride at them -- slow work, and very bad for your horse. Also it must tend to take the dash out of our young thrusters. If a keen lad starts on his own line and jumps big fences, possibly taking a fall or two, only to find himself wired time after time and marked back to the tail of the hunt, it must damp his ardour.

There are fortunately many blessed counties that are still more or less clear of it, but in most hunts much more could be done. A great step would be gained if someone could be induced to take up the wire question in every parish of a hunt, who would go all round getting any existing wire taken down as far as possible, and reporting on the attitude towards hunting of any occupiers who still kept it up. The M.F.H., or whoever is appointed by him, would then know exactly where the wire was and what manner of man he had to deal with. Ladies, when they take this work up, do it well. To get it down and put up again costs money, and of course increased subscriptions will be needed, but money that gets wire down is well spent.



CHAPTER VII.

Give me a man to whom naught comes amiss,  
One horse or another, that country or this;  
Who through falls and bad starts undauntedly still  
Rides up to the motto "Be with them I will".

EGERTON WARBURTON.

Many of us have, I expect, at times wondered why there are so few really good men to hounds. The answer is not an easy one to give, nor can it, I feel sure, be given in a word.

When hounds run fast and hard over an enclosed country, and all packs do at times, in spite of hound shows, it does not come at once to any man to ride his own line and stick to them. Many men go hunting, but only a few ever learn to do this well. In the majority of cases it is not, I think, from the want of courage or nerve; to excel, one must, of course, have good nerves, but several other qualities are equally essential. One of the greatest stumbling blocks is want of quickness in forming an instant decision as to whether a fence is jumpable or not. So many men will jump a big place directly they have seen another man go, but they have no confidence in their own judgment. They feel that if leading and in front they may take on a perfectly impossible place or turn from one over which another man, coming up, flicks without an effort. This latter proceeding is somewhat humiliating, and here we have one reason why so few men settle down resolutely to ride their own line when hounds run.

The first thing a lad who wishes to excel has to learn (I am now talking of merely the riding part of the





game) is to judge his fences accurately and instantly. He will get falls while learning, but if he has good horses, good nerves, and a quick eye for the best place in a fence, he will soon find that when hounds are running fast there are in most countries very few unjumpable fences. I use the word fast advisedly. Horses will face and clear places when hounds are running hard and their blood is up that they will turn from in a slow hunting run. There is no surer way of spoiling a gallant horse than forcing him into big fences when hounds are hunting slowly. A good hunter soon knows all about it, and if you drive him through some nasty thick place and arrive in the next field with a scramble and then have to stand still, he thinks you are a fool, and he is quite right, too. Next time you ask him to jump such a place he refuses. I really cannot write about riding to hounds without mentioning my dearly-loved and very perfect grey mare Bessie. She knew everything a hunter can know. In a slow hunting run, although at such times I never took liberties with her, she would sometimes whip round at a hairy fence. She knew perfectly well there was no hurry, and rather seemed to suggest we should look for a pleasanter place or let somebody else bore the hole; but in a quick thing she held very different views. If we got well away she as good as said: "All right master, trust me; we will keep our front seat". If we failed it was never her fault, and under those conditions she would face gallantly and freely any fence I ever dared to ride her at.

That point of having two styles of riding, one for the slow hunting runs and one for the quick things, is, I think, important. It is the best preventative of refusals that I know; good horses ridden in this way should never turn their heads when going really fast. It is a cure, too, for the fault of showing off - coming suddenly out of a crowd and charging a big and unnecessary fence to impress onlookers with your prowess - and such-like contemptible proceedings.

A lad may learn much by selecting a really good first flight man as his pilot, but for a time only; it must



not become a habit. During that time let me impress two things on him. First, let him give his pilot ample room and see him well into the next field before he rides at a fence, for horses often fall a length or two after landing. That obligation must never be forgotten; it is a crime to jump on a man who is taking you by "the shortest and most direct route" to hounds. Secondly, let him try and watch the leading hounds for himself, and always be on the look-out for a chance to turn inside his pilot and then to ride his own line for a while. If he has been following a real artist, he will be struck by the fact that the best and easiest places in the fences always seem to come opposite to him, whereas when he turns off on his own line, that is far from being the case. But the artist has spotted the best place to jump out of each field as he jumps into it, and gradually diverges to his selected place, so that it seems, as it were, to come opposite to him of its own accord.

There we come on a great secret - how far to go out of your line to get an easy place. On that point, I think, not even the greatest of our riders to hounds could lay down any rule. Some fences solve the difficulty by having only one possible place, so you must go there. But on this point I can only say that when fences are reasonable and hounds are running fast, it is a mistake to go any considerable distance out of your way for an easy place. How far to diverge must depend on the fence, the going, your horse, and the pace the hounds are running, and can only be learnt by practical experience. When once you have picked your place, stick to it; to change upsets your horse, and to those riding near him a man who changes about is a danger and a nuisance.

I have often been struck by the almost touching faith of the "ruck" in their leader's judgment. In any hunt you will find little groups waiting, with more or less impatience, their turn at one particular spot on a fence, while close by are other places just as easy



or easier. But such groups are composed of riders without initiative, their guiding rule being to go where others have gone.

A good horseman, who has learned, as he jumps into a field, to estimate the fence out of it and to pick the best place in it, has gone a long way towards being a first flight man.

Of course, the far side of a fence must always be a more or less unknown quantity. If this were not so, riding to hounds would not be half the fun it is. But it takes a very big ditch to trap a horse ridden freely, yet collectedly, over a flying country, and if it is a case of banks, the extra lift a horse will put in when he finds a trap on the landing side is astounding.

In the grass countries especially, with big fields out, a man must learn to gallop. You must gallop in earnest at the start, slip over the first two or three fences wherever you can get at them, then, if hounds run on, you ought to find yourself with a more or less clear front and in a position to watch the leading hounds and pick your places.

One tip, which I was given before I went for my first winter on the grass, I have found invaluable and never forgotten. It was this: "No matter how fast hounds are running, or how great a hurry you are in, take a strong steadier at your horse before each fence. Pull right back into a canter twenty yards or less from the fence, and then set him at it". Ridden in this way, I have found that horses jump bigger and better and take less out of themselves.

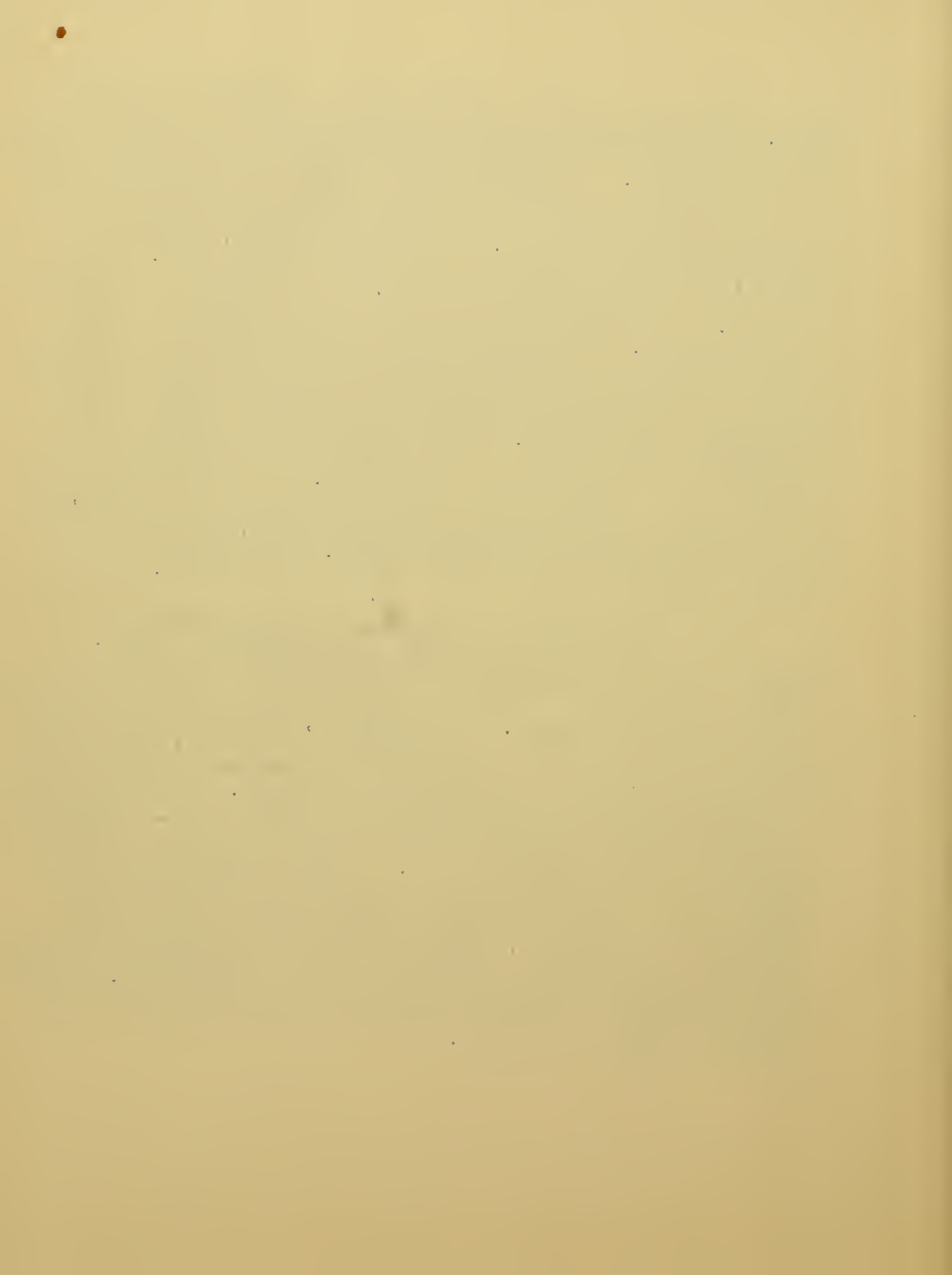
This piece of advice has proved very useful both to myself and others. Some years ago I met a friend at Tattersall's, and he asked me to come and look at a horse he thought of buying, a horse with a reputation, although quite a young one. It was full of quality,



but struck me as rather leggy, and I crabbed it a good deal. Next day he bought it for a very good figure, which showed at least that he attached no undue importance to my judgment. In the winter I went to stay with him, and as soon as I arrived he told me the new grey did not go well with him, and was always refusing, and added that he wanted me to ride it. I was, as usual, snort of horses, and said I should be only too delighted. Now, my friend's strong suit in riding to hounds was extreme courage. He rather adopted the "loose rein and bloody spur" methods. Although he went very well on a horse that suited him, I suspected the long-legged new purchase got all abroad and sprawled about - felt, in fact, that he was not collected enough to do himself justice at a big fence, so refused. This idea proved correct, for a few days later his owner returned to the subject and asked me how I would ride the horse. Now, the state of my stud made a practical illustration most desirable, but we had had a good hunt and a good dinner, so I handed on the tip just as it was given to me. It was adopted, the horse refused no more, and I never had my ride.

The habit of selecting ground when hounds are running must not be ignored, for it is an important matter. A short course of hunting with foot beagles - a very interesting sport - would do many people good on this point and on several others. You do not, for instance, see people on foot press in on hounds "at fault", as riders too often do, nor do they chatter quite so much at a check, but puff and blow in comparative silence. Neither do they try to follow hounds when they are being cast, prepared to press them the moment they recover the line and before they can really settle to it. And, returning to the question of selecting good going and easing your horse when you can, any moderately intelligent human being, running with beagles, will pick out the lightest and soundest ground he can find to run on, and will carefully watch hounds to save himself as much as possible. Substitute "ride" for "run", and that is what you have to do when riding to hounds.





It is important, too, when fox-hunting, to study the direction of the wind. When hounds are drawing or hunting in big woodlands, and the wind is high, if one does not keep down wind, it is easy to lose them completely; and when hounds are running across the wind in the open it is well to keep down wind of them, for tired foxes nearly always sink the wind. But it is a mistake to think that a fox, even a tired one, never turns up wind: I have seen men lose a hunt from a too implicit belief in this rule, and the failing does not seem to have been unknown to our grandfathers, for Beckford, writing of huntsmen, says; "I have known them lose foxes rather than condescend to try up the wind at all".

The importance of closely watching hounds, both for their sakes and your own, cannot be exaggerated. I shall return to the subject in another chapter, from the hound point of view; but here I will only add that unless you learn to watch hounds closely and study their ways, you will never ride up to them well, day in and day out, as a good man should.

In my opinion the good man to hounds is the persistent performer - the man who tries each day he goes out, and who tries equally on all his horses, who always tries to get a start, and when he fails sees all he can of a run from a back seat, while, without riding his horse's head off, he is on the look-out to alter that back seat to a front one.

When all is said and written about riding to hounds, the greatest secret is a grim determination, when you are well placed alongside hounds, to stay there; and when you get badly away, an equally grim determination to stick to it and put matters right at the first chance you get. The man who, when he gets a good start and when he is riding his best horse, can flash over country brilliantly for fifteen minutes and then dies away, is of no account.

A very dear old friend of mine afforded a good illustration of what such determination can do. In his youth all sport, except hunting, had come his way. Of that he had none, nor, I think, more riding than falls to the lot of an Adjutant of a Highland regiment.



Later, Fate brought him into one of the strongest of our Midland countries, and he took to hunting at once. He rode cheap horses and gave them long days, and they generally seemed to me stale, yet he always saw a hunt and saw it well. Often I wondered how he did it. One day I found myself galloping beside him, close to hounds, up a long, steeply-sloping grass field. At the top, standing well out on the sky-line, was a black and most forbidding-looking fence. There was no gate and no gap; it did not seem to matter where you had it, it was nasty everywhere.

I looked at my friend's horse and, at a generous estimate, put him as three parts beat. Thinking that he might not quite realise what he was in for, I called to him: "We shall both take it heavy at the top of the hill." "Yes," he replied, in the most matter-of-fact way, "I suppose we shall."

He plodded steadily on, drove at the fence, took a fairly heavy fall, lost not a minute in getting up, jumped on his horse, and proceeded in the wake of hounds without another word. Now, that is the sort of spirit that takes a man to hounds on all sorts of horses and in all sorts of countries.

I may add I was riding a very brilliant horse and had no intention of falling merely saying "we" out of politeness. Even so, I only just got over with a "peck".

Quickness at the start is essential for every man who wants to ride his own line, and no doubt is even more essential for heavy than light weights. With a big field out you must gallop at once, whatever your weight, but when the field is small a light-weight on a fast horse can afford a little time. But he must watch hounds closely, and be ready to take a front seat if they really settle to run.

The quickest heavy-weight at a start I ever saw was my old friend Tom Atkinson, of Glenwilliam, to whose help and judgment I owe many a good Irish hunter. To



see him thunder down from a Limerick hillside gorse on one of his enormous horses and rocket over the wall or bank at the bottom was a sight not easily forgotten. I at least could never catch him until the weight began to tell and the big horse to tire; but, tired or not, it had to go on galloping and jumping. I don't think I ever lured him on to the scales, but am certain he was giving me, at a low estimate, not less than eight stone. He had mastered the truth that horses can give away weight, but not distance, and was, I believe, admitted to be one of the best heavy-weights in Ireland.

With a nice free hunter that has come perfectly to hand, it is quite easy, and may at times be useful, to jump fences on the slant; not to ride at them straight, but to take them at an angle. At quite small fences, if you are in a great hurry, you can save ground by doing this, but you must take care there is nobody near you or you may get knocked over. I have more than once found it very useful in the old-fashioned type of point-to-point races, when there was only one flag and you had to get to it by the shortest route you could find.

In these days of tarred and slippery roads it is again of value to be able to jump into them on the slant. If there is a narrow grass siding and you land on it, pointing in the direction you want to go, you can complete the turn on the grass before coming on to the slippery surface. But if you go straight in, your horse is on the tar at once, tries to turn on it, and a fall is almost inevitable, and such roads are nasty hard falling. I have only tried this plan over small fences, when jumping either from field to field or into roads, but I have read that Asheton Smith, the mighty hunter, adopted it when riding at very high, strong timber, on the grounds that, so ridden, his horses gave him less dangerous falls.

If you want to go straight in and out of a lane or road, select a weak place or hole to go out at, and chance the fence in. Any horse will jump into a road, but it requires a very resolute one to jump out if the fence is black and strong.. I have found this tip very useful in point-to-point racing, and have seen many refusals in that class of racing owing to the neglect of it.





I always think a great deal of no sense is talked (I speak, of course, as a light-weight) about jarring horses at drops. If you come to a fairly big flying fence with a drop on the landing side, then of course there is a jar, and you cannot collect your horse too carefully or lie too far back in your saddle as you land. Remember it is very little use lying back in your saddle if you stick your feet out in front of you; as you lie back they must be drawn back too, or all the jar comes into your stirrups. If at such a fence, as your horse almost staggers from the shock of landing, you come well on to his neck or heavily into your thrust-forward stirrups, you are of considerable assistance in toppling him over, or at the best adding to the jar and risk of injury.

But in jumping a clever horse down into a deep lane or such-like place, there is very little risk of hurting him or of a fall. At such places the fence is often weak and you can wall your horse into it and then drop him down. I have had some horses that seemed to have the knack of landing as lightly as a bird, and they were always ready to jump down any reasonable height, clear proof that it did not jar them. With a horse that gets nervous and makes a wild, hurried jump, it is altogether another matter. It is, I think, at such places that the man who "makes" his own horses and rides them too, in mild bits, has an advantage.

Before leaving the subject of riding to hounds, one word on "bucking," or "swanking," as it is now called. Believe me, it is best left alone. It is so fatally easy to talk about your horse and his wonderful powers, and incidentally to show what a wonderful rider he has, but don't do it. I really think men in the hunting field are more correctly reckoned up than anywhere else. If you go well you will get the credit without asking for it. The only men I have noted who have been underestimated are the very ones who are always explaining how well they go. I don't deny for a moment that there are some downright good men who "swank", but I am sure all their real friends wish they wouldn't.



I remember once coming up to London with a carriage full of hunting men, and one lad who was always full of his own prowess was burning to tell us about a run he had been in, the rest of us having been out with another pack. He was just getting fairly under way, when a quiet voice from the corner interrupted: "We have hardly time for it all; go on from where you jumped the locked gate and had them entirely to yourself." We heard no more of that run.

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CHAPTER VIII.

But the player may strain every finger in vain,  
And the fiddler may rosin his bow,  
Nor flourish nor string such a rapture shall bring  
As the music of sweet Tally-ho!

WHYTE BELVILLE.

If I began to write on the advantages of fox-hunting over all other sports, I should fill pages and possibly become extremely tedious; so, remembering Sam Weller's remark with reference to the differing of tastes accounting for the existence of fancy waistcoats, I will refrain.

But one thing I will say, and that is that fox-hunting "stays" with those who really love it in an extraordinary way. Some of the keenest men I have known have ranged from seventy-five to eighty-five, and I could even name men at, or over, the former age who would take on strong timber with the best of the rising generation.

It stays with us, too, in another way - it stays in our memories. For myself, I know I remember the really brilliant hunts I have seen far better than I remember anything else, far better than chase or race, even if lucky enough to get home first. I am sure I am not peculiar in this, for I have often met men with whom I have ridden a good hunt, years afterwards, and found they recollected every detail just as vividly as I did.

Some of the best and keenest men I have known, men who "stay", and are a stay to their own hunts, are not men who ever care for crashing along in front and cutting out the work. That is grand fun for those whose tastes lie that way, but there is many a real good sportsman who does not care for it. I have noticed, too, that the men who do most for their hunts are not always those who are most conspicuous when hounds run hard. So that, while admiring and giving due credit to the gallant souls who are always ready to go in front and cut out the work, let no one sneer at good sportsmen who have no such ambitions.



I have hunted with fox-hounds in many countries, good, bad, and indifferent, but however small or easy they were to cross, I have never been in one of which some local enthusiast did not remark to me: "If a horse can cross this country, he can cross any country". I never presumed to differ, for I like the local enthusiast, and have much more respect for him than for the man who only shoots in his own country and dashes off to the shires to hunt, doing little or nothing for his local pack, in some extreme cases failing even to keep a fox in his home covers. Such a man is beneath contempt, and I should enjoy seeing the local enthusiast jump on him.

In the above remark, however, if you substitute "man" for "horse", you will not be far from the truth. The man who thinks for himself and finds his own way over country when hounds run will go just as well in one country as another. Take a good man from the provinces, put him down in the shires, with the right stamp of horse, and he will take his usual place. It may take him a day or two to get used to slipping the crowd - the crowd who have no wish to go, and who get in the way - but after that, on a fast "big-jumped" horse, as they say in Ireland, he will find it most probably rather easier to ride his own line than at home. For the shires are made to be ridden over, so to speak, and on the right type of horse it is easier to get to hounds in those favoured localities than in many provincial countries.

It would seem very probable in the future that men will more often have to select one sport and stick to it. The class of man who hunted, raced, shot and fished, who was able to go in for all sports, will hardly be so numerous as in the past.

a/ If a man finds he can only afford one sport, and selects hunting (to me it seems incredible that anyone should not, but that, I know, is being narrow-minded), he can get far more joy and pleasure out of it by really trying to understand the noble science. During those glorious autumn mornings in the big woods with the cubs he can learn so much about fox-hunting. There are usually only a few out, and one can often be of use to the officials of the hunt, and it is a good chance to study the hounds in their work and learn to know some of them. Knowing at least a few of the best hounds and watching them in their work always adds to one's pleasure.





These joys the men who were busy with other sports until well on into November never realised. There is no shadow of doubt about this fact - the more a man learns about fox-hunting, the more he will enjoy it.

And how much, too, a really keen man can do to help the sport in his own neighbourhood by setting a good example in the hunting field. A kindly word of thanks for any little service rendered, an occasional half-crown to back it, a prompt apology and payment for any concrete bit of damage done by the individual, such as a smashed gate or stile, puts the matter right.

A little care to get round stock, so as to prevent them getting out of a field; or, if they have slipped out, a little time spent in getting them back or penning them in elsewhere. Consider the trouble we give when, by leaving a gate open, we let a couple of horses out of a field into a high-road. They may go almost any distance, and it may mean two days' work or more for a man before they are found and got home. Then, too, when riding about the country, both when hounds are not running and when they are, I would urge on everyone always to consider how they can avoid doing damage. One could fill pages with instances of want of thought which must be very annoying to the farmer. There is a certain class of rider who is always in a desperate hurry when it involves cutting across the corner of a wheatfield or something of that sort, yet whose hurry dies away when he comes to a fence, where he will patiently await his turn to walk through a gap; such men always seem to me very contemptible.

Then, too, beware of excitability and swearing at large. Some men seem to think that because they are out hunting they may swear at anyone. It is certainly very annoying when a man won't open a gate or let you through his yard, but much more can be done by going and having a quiet talk with him than by swearing when both you and he have your tempers up.

I could quote several cases to prove the harm that excited abuse has done to hunting; one especially remains in my memory. A small landholder was rather slow in going to open a gate, and the gate proved difficult to open. An excited member of the field, irritated by the delay, abused the man. Now, the small-holder was unfortunately both bad-tempered and well off. He



promptly put a wire fence all round his property, kept his gates locked, and warned hounds off.

The sad thing about it was that the man who did all the harm was a keen, good sportsman, with charming manners except when he got excited out hunting. For years, though, the matter could not be put right. I have known even more trivial things put men against hunting, and very often they nurse their grievance and won't tell anyone what it is.

All cannot subscribe largely, but all who are keen can help the hunt in many little ways. As I have already said, it seems certain, too, that expenses will go up and subscriptions will have to be increased. After all, our subscriptions have in the past been a very small part of our expenses. This proportion will have to be altered. A young man too often lavishes money on his horses, on his clothes, and in London during a frost, and gives a very inadequate subscription to hounds.

As for horses, we cannot do without them, but we may have to do with a smaller and cheaper stud and produce a bigger subscription. The man with a small stud, who rides his horses about in the summer and takes them cub-hunting, has an advantage over the man with the big stud, who hurries down after the season has begun, and hardly nows one of his horses from another. He at least misses the great pleasure of getting his horses perfectly to hand, so that they do exactly what he wants in the way he wants.

Whyte Melville, in his very fascinating "Riding Recollections," gives the following vivid description bearing on this point. (I would go bail that the reverend gentleman in question had only a small stud, and did not leave the exercising of them entirely to grooms).

"I remember," he writes, "seeing the Rev. John Bower, an extraordinarily fine rider of the last generation, hand his horse over an ugly iron-bound stile on to some stepping-stones, with a drop of six or seven feet, into a Leicestershire lane, as calmly as if the animal had seen a lady whom he was taking out for a walk.

"He pulled it back into a trot, sitting very close and quiet, with his hand raised two or three inches above the withers, and I can still



recall, as if I had seen it yesterday, the curve of neck and quarters, as, gently mouthing the bit, that well-broken hunter poised lightly for its spring, and, landing in the same collected form, picked its way daintily, step by step down the declivity, like a cat."

Such perfection of understanding between horse and rider can only, I think, be arrived at by the man who has a small stud of which he is complete master - that he has, in fact, made to his hand. I would argue that to have such a perfect animal is a great joy and, if achieved, should more than compensate for the necessity of a bigger subscription and a smaller stud.

It is very easy to have too large a stud, which means a number of horses always short of work and above themselves in condition. Horses in that state are never at their best or pleasant to ride. In fact, the only advantage I can see in a big stud, apart from the pleasure of mounting friends, is that in spite of any run of bad stable luck, you can always go hunting. A man with only four or five horses, if sport has been good and he has been really shoving them along, may easily find himself with nothing to ride for a time.

Still, a small stud saves much money, and the owner will be better carried. I have often thought second horses might well be abolished. Second horse-men do much harm, add to the expense, and when one good stout hunter is tired, his rider has had a good day's sport. Then, too, if none of us had second horses, after a good hunt in the morning we should all ride with less liberality and dash in the afternoon, use our heads more and nurse our horses, but we should see the sport nevertheless. Also we should find out which are the really stout, staying hunters, their blood would be sought after, and our breed of stayers, not too plentiful, improved.

When second horses are used, no man should be allowed to ride as second horseman until he has received careful instruction as to shutting all gates, avoiding damage to crops, together with a few hints as to his general behaviour in the hunting field.

To show how little some men know of their large studs, I can quote a case of a good but very wealthy sportsman who, after a quick thing in which he had gone well, remarked to a friend: "What a nailer this





mare is! She is the only one I ever have a real go on now." His friend replied that no doubt the animal was a "nailer," but it did not happen to be a mare. It turned out that not only had he mistaken his favourite mare, when changing horses, for a gelding, but for a gelding in which he had no confidence whatever! The man of the small stud, who has to make his own hunters, is at least saved from that kind of mistake.

It is a great point to dress properly for hunting. A red coat is a passport in all the countryside, and villagers like to see a smart turn-out. But again subscriptions must come before clothes. An old song runs in my head -

If my life should depend on the wager,  
I know not which brother I'd back,  
The Parson, the Squire, or the Major,  
The Red, or the Pink, or the Black.

We may be perfectly certain the major, who no doubt was in a smart cavalry regiment, spent more on his hunting kit than the parson brother, but it does not appear to have given him any advantage when hounds ran.

So that if the proposition is accepted that hunting can only be carried on in these days if subscriptions come first, it can be shown that we shall not lose much individually by that. When one considers, too, what one can get for a hunt subscription, who can deny that if they have to be very greatly increased we shall still, if we have any real love of hunting, get our money's worth in full?

Consider, for one thing, how long the sport lasts. If you don't mind early rising, you can begin with cub-hunting in September, even earlier with some packs.

Then comes the regular season in November, and, bar a frost, you can keep steadily at it to at least the end of March. And even a short frost is sometimes welcome to the owner of a hard-worked little stud.

Hunting, too, is the most democratic of all sports, and brings together good fellows of all classes. The penniless younger son may take a better place on his



cheap hunter, when hounds run, than the lord-lieutenant on a five-hundred guinea one. The smallest farmer can ride clean away from the biggest landlord, provided he is the better man.

Money tells in providing good hunters, but it also provides French cooks and too many luxuries, and that soon takes away the nerve to make use of them. To really enjoy hunting, we must keep ourselves fit and hard.

There is no sport like it on this old earth of ours, and I often think of the remark made to me by an enthusiast I met in Rio Janeiro, of all strange places: "I have been over a great deal of the world," said he, "in search of sport, but when all is said and done, give me the little stinking fox."

-----ooOoo-----



## CHAPTER IX.

He guides them in covert, he leads them in chase;  
Though the young and the jealous try hard for his place,  
'Tis Bachelor always is first in the race.  
He beats them for nose and he beats them for pace.

WHYTE MELVILLE.

It has been suggested and would be, I think, a very excellent plan if everyone were obliged, before going fox-hunting, to pass a little examination and answer a few simple questions on the noble sport.

One thing that I would try to impress on every lad who takes seriously to hunting is this: from the time hounds move off from the meet until they go home, keep your whole attention concentrated on them. If a lad begins in this way from the first, it will soon become a habit, and, almost without knowing it, he will find himself always on the alert and watchful. So much, too, can be done by every individual member of the field, if his attention is really fixed on the sport, to make the work of the hunt servants less trying. Both the huntsman and his hounds and the whippers-in have constantly to pass through the "field." If you are on the look-out and make way for them, it makes their work much easier, and the example one man sets in making way is quickly followed by others.

It is always worth while trying to help the hunt servants in any way, and they appreciate it. They are good fellows, and many a kindly hint have they given me from time to time, and they alone, of all men, are worth attending to if they drop a word in the morning as to what sort of scent to expect. From coming on with hounds and knowing them so well, they can sometimes form a fairly sound opinion on that mysterious essence.

As well as always being ready to make way in lane or roadway, be careful, unless you have the utmost



confidence in your horse, to turn him so that he cannot kick at hounds when the pack is passing you. A kick that kills a good hound is very quickly and easily given, and then you have done a terrible thing. I remember once riding home after a good hunt with Tom Bishop, who was then hunting the Grafton. He talked for long of one particular dog-hound - let us call him Bachelor - who that day had done some very fine work down a road. It was easy to see what absolute confidence he had in the hound, and what pride he took in his stoutness and nose. The very next day the bitch pack was out - for Bachelor ran with the bitches - the poor hound was kicked by a newcomer's horse and killed dead. Our long talk as we rode home made me realise the tragedy of it.

It is an absolute obligation on anyone riding young horses to take the greatest care that his youngster is given no chance to kick hounds. In a wood one has to be extra careful: as hounds come bounding out on to the rides they are apt to frighten a horse, and a frightened horse kicks. It is generally easy to tell, from the direction a huntsman is drawing, what rides the hounds will break into, and then to take precautions. If you keep "at" a horse's mouth he will seldom kick, but if he makes the attempt punish him severely. It is not difficult, as a rule, to cure horses of kicking; but better still, never let them begin. Have dogs about in the stable and take them with you when you are hacking, and send them to exercise with the horses. Best of all, walk a couple of foxhound puppies: young horses soon get accustomed to hounds then.

I often think that if people who hunt would always try to be on the look-out to help things on, instead of being so ready to criticise, it would be an exceedingly good change. One gets so weary of criticism that is ignorant, and I have noticed that those who know most say least. There are probably not more than three or four huntsmen with real genius hunting hounds in Great Britain at any given time. Yet certain folk are not content with a good hardworking huntsman, who shows them good sport when there is good scent and he has a fair chance: they grumble away, and seem to think that every pack they choose to hunt with is entitled to a first-class heaven-sent genius. How often, in my





long hunting life, have I listened to this sort of thing: "Now, what on earth is our idiot of a huntsman doing? Anyone could tell his fox - By Jove, they've hit it! Come on!"

Of course, if they don't hit it, the lecture on hunting goes on, and if by any chance the critic's idea happens to be right (and he can't be wrong every time), he is so pleased with himself as to be a positive nuisance for the rest of the day. When they do hit it, as likely as not he dashes off and, unless checked, presses hounds before they have again really settled on the line.

At a check you usually see people coming up, determined not to pull up until they are just a little bit in front of where the leaders have stopped; this is most unsporting. Say that three or four men, who have really been with hounds, pull up, they are not in the least likely to have given hounds too much room, so why cannot their followers accept the situation and stay a little behind them? That was the position when hounds were running, and there is nothing very clever or daring in taking the lead at a check.

Let your rule be to pull up in good time when leading, to pull up behind the leaders when you are not, and in either case to keep your mouth shut. A lot of people talking does not help hounds or huntsman.

Ladies are great offenders, not entirely from their own fault. If they are properly "entered" - that is to say, if they have a relative or friend who knows all about the sport of fox-hunting, and studies how to avoid doing damage to crops, and who will pass on his knowledge to them, then all is well. I have noticed that women so educated are quite as thoughtful for hounds, hunt servants, and farmers' interests as any man, if not more so.

But such women are rather the exception. If an ignorant lad comes out, he will soon get well sworn at if he does stupid things; but most men are very loath to find fault with women in the hunting field. Therefore the woman who is not well "entered" has much less chance of learning how to behave from being cursed at large than a man has.



So it is up to the ladies, I think, to make a point of learning something about hunting, if they mean to hunt, and they can then do much for the sport by their influence and by setting a good example. They might also remember that their dear favourite horses hurt people just as much when they kick them as if they were ordinary hunters! Ladies will not, as a rule, punish their horses for kicking; they are too gentle with them.

The position of M.F.H. is not all fun; try to make it as easy as possible. He is sure to have to swear at you sometimes. Nobody goes hunting who does not do some stupid things, and you may get sworn at, too, when you are not to blame; but in any case take it all in good part and bear no ill-will. I must add the most perfectly controlled fields I have ever known have been worked on the quiet system, without any yelling or swearing.

I think any old Grafton man will bear me out when I say that no man ever controlled a field better than the present Lord Penrhyn. He not only never swore, but very seldom spoke. He was always in the right place when wanted, and had only to hold up his hand.

A master with a jealous temperament is the hardest of all to bear with; jealousy is not wanted in the hunting field. The jealous hound who, when leading, will go on when he knows he is off the line, trying to carry the pack with him, is best hung. The jealous rider who is always ready to spoil sport, provided he can establish the fact that he really is in front of everybody else, can't be hung, but a good many people often wish he could.

All lads, of course, should know the unwritten law that you must not gallop in the wake of hounds; it makes them wild. An equally well-known but often ignored law is that which prevents your going on if any man has got down to pull open a gate, or anything of that sort, until he is in the saddle again. It is not sufficient to shoot past, saying as you do so, "Can you get up all right?" taking great care at the same time not hear his answer. No, you ought really to wait.

Englishmen are, as a rule, very slow at getting



into the saddle, partly, of course, owing to the kit they ride in. But any lithe, active lad can learn to vault into the saddle if he takes a little trouble over it, and it is well worth learning. It will save time in a hunt, and may make the difference between winning and losing a point-to-point.

But what I would most of all try to impress on the youngster is this: if you want really to enjoy hunting, to ride straight and well to hounds when you are young, and follow the sport from a less ambitious position when you grow old - learn really to love and understand it - read books that will explain the art of hunting, listen to and question men who really know, and, above all, watch hounds and keep your attention on the sport while you are out.

Never be in a hurry to holloa if a fox breaks cover near you. Let him get well away before you holloa, or you may turn him back into the cover. No rule is more often broken.

When hounds have run a fox into a cover or wood, and you view a fox away, then indeed you must be careful. Remember what Beckford says: "Changing from a hunted fox to a fresh one is one of the worst accidents that can happen to a pack of foxhounds."

If you are not certain that the fox you have viewed is the hunted one, don't holloa, but go at once to the master or huntsman, tell him you have viewed a fox away, and give your opinion for what it is worth. If you describe the fox accurately it will be a great help, and he is almost certain at some period of the hunt to have been already viewed either by the master or the servants.

Let me close with one more quotation from Beckford, which we may all take to heart: "Whoever has followed hounds has seen them frequently hurried beyond the scent."

So, leaving that warning to sink in, farewell and good hunting!

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